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SPIRITUAL ADVENTURES

BY

ARTHUR SYMONS

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A PRELUDE TO LIFE.

A PRELUDE TO LIFE

I

I am afraid I must begin a good way back if I am to explain myself to myself at all satisfactorily. I can see how the queer child I was laid the foundation of the man I became, and yet I remember singularly little of my childhood. My parents were never very long in one place, and I have never known what it was to have a home, as most children know it; a home that has been lived in so long that it has got into the ways, the bodily creases, of its inhabitants, like an old, comfortable garment, warmed through and through by the same flesh. I left the town where I was born when I was one year old, and I have never seen it since. I do not even remember in what part of England my eyes first became conscious of the things about them. I remember the hammering of iron on wood, when a great ship was launched in a harbour; the terrifying sound of cannons, as they burst into smoke on a great plain near an ancient castle, while the soldiers rode in long lines across the grass; the clop-clop of a cripple with a wooden leg; with my intense terror at the toppling wagons of hay, as I passed them in the road. I remember absolutely nothing else out of my very early childhood; I have not even been told many things about it, except that I once wakened my mother, as I lay in a little cot at her side, to listen to the nightingales, and that Victor Hugo once stopped the nurse to smile at me, as she walked with me in her arms at Fermain Bay, in Guernsey. If I have been a vagabond, and have never been able to root myself in any one place in the world, it is because I have no early memories of any one sky or soil. It has freed me from many prejudices in giving me its own unresting kind of freedom; but it has cut me off from whatever is stable, of long growth in the world.

I could not read until I was nine years old, and I could not read because I resolutely refused to learn. I declared that it was impossible; that I, at all events, never could do it; and I made the most of a slight weakness in my eyes, saying that it hurt them, and drawing tears out of my eyes at the sight of a book. I liked being read to, and I used to sit on the bed while my sister, who often had to lie down to rest, read out stories to me. I had a theory that a boy must never show any emotion, and the pathetic parts of 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' tried me greatly. On one occasion I felt my sobs choking me, and the passion of sorrow, mingled with the certainty that my emotion would betray itself, sent me into a paroxysm of rage, in which I tore the book from my sister's hands, and attacked her with my fists.

I never learned to read properly until I went to school at the age of nine. I had been for a little while to a dame's school, and learned nothing. I could only read easy words, out of large print books, and I was totally ignorant of everything in the world, when I suddenly found I had to go to school. I was taken to see the schoolmaster, whom I hated, because I had been told he had only one lung, and I heard them explaining to him how backward I was, and how carefully I had to be treated. When the day came I left the house as if I were going to the scaffold, walked very slowly until I had nearly reached the door of the school, and then, when I saw the other boys hurrying in with their satchels, and realised that I was to be in their company, to sit on a form side by side with strangers, who knew all the things I did not know, I turned round and walked away much more quickly than I had come. I took some time in getting home, and I had to admit that I had not been to school. In the afternoon I was sent back, not alone. I have no recollection of more than the obscure horror of that first day at school. I went home in the evening with lessons that I knew had to be learned. Life seemed suddenly to have become serious. Up to then I had always fancied that the grave things people said to me had no particular meaning for me; for other people, no doubt, but not for me. I had played with other boys on the terrace facing the sea; I had seen them going off to school, and I had not had to go with them. Now everything had changed.

There was no longer any sea; I had to live in a street; I had lessons to learn, and other people were to be conscious how well I learned them.

It was that which taught me to read. What had seemed to me not worth doing when I had only myself to please, for I could never realise that my parents, so to speak, counted, became all at once a necessity, because now there were others to reckon with. It was discovered that in the midst of my unfathomable ignorance I had one natural talent; I could spell, without ever being taught. I saw other boys poring over the columns of their spelling-books, trying in vain to get the order of the letters into their heads. I never even read them through; they came to me by ear, instinctively. Finding myself able to do without trying something that the others could not succeed in doing at all, I felt that I could be hardly less intelligent than they, and I felt the little triumph of outdoing others. I began to learn greedily.

The second day I was at school I found the schoolroom door shut when I came into the playground, and I was told that I could not come in. I climbed the gymnasium ladder and looked through the window. Two boys were having a furious fight, and the bigger boys of the school were gravely watching it. I was completely fascinated; it was a new sensation. That day a boy bigger than myself jeered at me. I struck him. There was a rapid fight before all the school, and I knocked him down. I never needed to fight again, nor did I.

When I had once begun to learn, I learned certain things very quickly, and others not at all. I never understood a single proposition of Euclid; I never could learn geography, or draw a map. Arithmetic and algebra I could do moderately, so long as I merely had to follow the rules; the moment common sense was required I was helpless. History I found entertaining, and I could even remember the dates, because they had to do with facts which were like stories. French and Latin I picked up easily, Greek with more difficulty. German I was never able to master; I had an instinctive aversion to the mere sound of it, and I could not remember the words; there were no pegs in my memory for them to hang upon, as there were for the words of all the Romance languages. When a thing did not interest me, nothing could make me learn it. I was not obstinate, I was helpless. I have never been able to make out why geography was so completely beyond my power. I have travelled since then over most of Europe, and I have learned geography with the sight of my eyes. But with all my passion for places I have never been able to find my way in them until I have come to find it instinctively, and I suppose that is why the names in the book or on the map said nothing to me. At an examination when I was easily taking half the prizes, I have read through my papers in geography and in Euclid, and taken them up to the head-master's desk, and handed them back to him, calmly telling him that I could not answer a single question. I was never able to go in for matriculation, or any sort of general public examination, to the great dissatisfaction of my masters, because, while I could have come out easily at the top in most of the subjects, there were always one or two in which I could do nothing.

I was not popular, at any of my schools, either with the boys or with the masters, but I was not disliked. I neither hated out-of-door games nor particularly cared for them. I rather liked cricket, but never played football. I was terribly afraid of making a mistake before other people, and would never attempt anything unless I was sure that I could do it. I did not make friends readily, and I was somewhat indifferent to my friends. I cannot now recollect a single school-friend at all definitely, except one strange little creature, with the look and the intelligence of a grown man; and I remember him chiefly because he seemed to care very much for me, not because I ever cared much for him. He had a mathematical talent which I was told was a kind of genius, but, even then, he was only just kept alive, and he died in boyhood. He seemed to me different from any one else I knew, more like a girl than a boy; some one to be pitied. I remember his saying good-bye to me when they took him away to die.

What the masters really thought of me I never quite knew. I looked upon them as a kind of machine, not essentially different from the blackboard on which they wrote figures in chalk. They sometimes made mistakes about things which I knew, and this gave me a general distrust of them. I took their praise coolly, as a thing which was my due, and I was quite indifferent to their anger. I took no pains to conceal my critical attitude towards them, and one classical master in particular was in terror of me. He was not a sound scholar, and he knew that I knew it. Every day he watched me out of the corner of his eye to see if I was going to expose him, and he bribed me by lending me books which I wanted to read. I loathed him, and left him alone. One day he carried his deceit too far; there was an inquiry, and he disappeared. I have no doubt my criticism was often unjust; I had the insolence of the parvenu in learning. It had come to me too late for me to be able to take it lightly. I corrected the dictation, put Maréchal for 'Marshal' because the word was used in reference to Ney, who I knew was a Frenchman; and was furious when my pedantry lost me a mark.

During all this time I was living in the country, in small country towns in the South of England, places to which Blackmore and Kingsley had given a sort of minor fame. I remember long drives by night over Dartmoor, and the sea at Westward Ho. Dartmoor had always a singular fascination for me, partly because of its rocky loneliness, the abrupt tors on which one could so easily be surprised in the mist, and partly because there was a convict prison there, in a little town which we often had occasion to visit. The most exquisite sensation of pleasure which the drinking of water has ever given me was one hot day on Dartmoor, when I drank the coldest water there ever was in the world out of the hollow of my hand under a little Roman bridge that we had to cross in driving to Princetown. The convict settlement was at Princetown, and as we came near we could see gangs of convicts at work on the road. Warders with loaded muskets walked up and down, and the men, in their drab clothes marked in red with the broad-arrow, shovelled and dug sullenly, like slaves. I thought every one of them had been a murderer, and when one of them lifted his head from his work to look at us as we passed I seemed to see some diabolical intention in his eyes. I still remember one horrible grimace, done, I suppose, to frighten me. I feared them, but I pitied them; I felt certain that some one was plotting how to escape, and that he would suddenly drop his shovel and begin to run, and that I should see the musket pointed at him and hear the shot, and see the man fall. Once there was an alarm that two convicts had escaped, and I expected at every moment to see them jump out from behind a rock as we drove back at night. The warders had been hurrying through the streets, I had seen the bloodhounds in leash; I sickened at the thought of the poor devils who would be captured and brought back between two muskets. Once I saw an escaped convict being led back to prison; his arms were tied with cords, he had a bloody scar on his forehead, his face was swollen with heat and helpless rage.

But I have another association with Princetown besides the convicts. It was in the house of one of the warders that I first saw 'Don Quixote.' We had gone in to get some tea, and, as we waited in the parlour, and my father talked with the man, a grave, powerful person dressed in dark-blue clothes, I came upon a book and opened it, and began to read. I thought it the most wonderful book I had ever seen; I could not put it down, I refused to be separated from it, and the warder said he would lend it to me, and I might take it back with me that night. There was a thunderstorm as we drove back over the moor in the black darkness; I remember the terror of the horse, my father's cautious driving, for the road was narrow and there was a ditch on each side; the rain poured, and the flashes of lightning lit up the solid darkness of the moor for an instant, and then left us in the hollow of a deeper darkness. I clutched the book tight under my overcoat; the majesty of the storm mingled in my head with the heroic figure of which I had just caught a glimpse in the book; I sat motionless, inexpressibly happy, and when we reached home I had to waken myself out of a dream.

The dream lasted until I had finished the book, and after. I cannot remember how I felt, I only know that no book had ever meant so much to me. It was 'Don Quixote' which wakened in me the passion for reading. From that time I read incessantly, and I read everything. The first verse I read was Scott, and from Scott I turned to Byron, at twelve or thirteen, as to a kind of forbidden fruit, which must be delicious because it is forbidden. I had been told that Byron was a very, very great poet, and a very, very wicked man, an atheist, a writer whom it was dangerous to read. At school I managed to get hold of a Byron, which I read surreptitiously at the same moment that I was reading 'The Headless Horseman.' I thought 'The Headless Horseman' very fine and gory, but I was disappointed in the Byron, because I could not find 'Don Juan' in it. I knew, through reading a religious paper which condemned wickedness in great detail, that 'Don Juan' was in some way appallingly wicked. I wanted to see for myself, but I never, at that time, succeeded in finding an edition immodest enough to contain it.

II.

While all this, and much more that I have forgotten, was building up about me the house of life that I was to live in, I was but imperfectly conscious of more than a very few things in the external world, and but half awake to more than a very few things in the world within me. I lived in the country, or at all events with lanes and fields always about me; I took long walks, and liked walking; but I never was able to distinguish oats from barley, or an oak from a maple; I never cared for flowers, except slightly for their colour, when I saw many of them growing together; I could not distinguish a blackbird from a thrush; I was never conscious in my blood of the difference between spring and autumn. I always loved the winter wind and the sunlight, and to plunge through crisp snow, and to watch the rain through leaves. But I would walk for hours without looking about me, or caring much for what I saw; I was never tired, and the mere physical delight of walking shut my eyes and my ears. I was always thinking, but never to much purpose; I hated to think, because thinking troubled me, and whenever I thought long my thoughts were sure to come round to one of two things: the uncertainty of life, and the uncertainty of what might be life after death. I was terribly afraid of death; I did not know exactly what held me to life, but I wanted it to last for ever. I had always been delicate, but never with any definite sickness; I was uneasy about myself because I saw that others were uneasy about me, and my voracious appetite for life was partly a kind of haste to eat and drink my fill at a feast from which I might at any time be called away. And then I was still more uneasy about hell.

My parents were deeply religious; we all went to church, a Nonconformist church, twice on Sunday; I was not allowed to read any but pious books or play anything but hymns or oratorios on Sunday; I was taught that this life, which seemed so real and so permanent to me, was but an episode in existence, a little finite part of eternity. We had grace before and after meals; we had family prayers night and morning; we seemed to live in continual communication with the other world. And yet, for the most part, the other world meant nothing to me. I believed, but could not interest myself in the matter. I read the Bible with keen admiration, especially Ecclesiastes; the Old Testament seemed to me wholly delightful, but I cared less for the New Testament; there was so much doctrine in it, it was so explicit about duties, about the conduct of life. I was taught to pray to God the Father, in the name of God the Son, for the inspiration of God the Holy Ghost. I said my prayers regularly; I was absolutely sincere in saying them; I begged hard for whatever I wanted, and thought that if I begged hard enough my prayer would be answered. But I found it very difficult to pray. It seemed to me that prayer was useless unless it were uttered with an intimate apprehension of God, unless an effort of will brought one mentally into His presence. I tried hard to hypnotise myself into that condition, but I rarely succeeded. Other thoughts drifted through my mind while my lips were articulating words of supplication. I said, over and over again, 'O Lord, for Jesus' sake!' and even while I was saying the words with fervour I seemed to lose hold of their meaning. I was taught that being clever mattered little, but that being good mattered infinitely. I wanted to want to be good, but all I really wanted was to be clever. I felt that this in itself was a wickedness. I could not help it, but I believed that I should be punished for not being able to help it. I was told that if I was very good I should go to heaven, but that if I was wicked I should go to hell. I saw but one alternative.

And so the thought of hell was often in my mind, for the most part very much in the background, but always ready to come forward at any external suggestion. Once or twice it came to me with such vividness that I rolled over on the ground in a paroxysm of agony, trying to pray God that I might not be sent to hell, but unable to fix my mind on the words of the prayer. I felt the eternal flames taking hold on me, and some foretaste of their endlessness seemed to enter into my being. I never once had the least sensation of heaven, or any desire for it. Never at any time did it seem to me probable that I should get there.

I remember once in church, as I was looking earnestly at the face of a child for whom I had a boyish admiration, that the thought suddenly shot across my mind: 'Emma will die, Emma will go to heaven, and I shall never see her again.' I shivered all through my body, I seemed to see her vanishing away from me, and I turned my eyes aside, so that I could not see her. But the thought gnawed at me so fiercely that a prayer broke out of me, silently, like sweat: 'O God, let me be with her! O God, let me be with her!' When I came out into the open air, and felt the cold breeze on my forehead, the thought had begun to relax its hold on me, and I never felt it again, with that certainty; but it was as if a veil had been withdrawn for an instant, the veil which renders life possible, and, for that instant, I had seen.

When my mother talked to me about pious things, I felt that they were extraordinarily real to her, and this impressed me the more because her thirst for this life was even greater than mine, and her hold on external things far stronger. My father was a dryly intellectual, despondent person, whose whole view of life was coloured by the dyspepsia which he was never without, and the sick headaches which laid him up for a whole day, every week or every fortnight. He was quite unimaginative, cautious in his affairs, a great reader of the newspaper; but he never seemed to me to have had the same sense of life as my mother and myself. I respected him, for his ability, his scholarship, and his character; but we had nothing akin, he never interested me. He was severely indulgent to me; I never knew him to be unkind, or even unreasonable. But I took all such things for granted, I felt no gratitude for them, and I was only conscious that my father bored me. I had no dislike for him; an indifference, rather; perhaps a little more than indifference, for if he came into the room, and I did not happen to be absorbed in reading, I usually went out of it. We might sit together for an hour, and it never occurred to either of us to speak. So when he spoke to me of my soul, which he did seriously, sadly, with an undertone of reproach, my whole nature rose up against him. If to be good was to be like him, I did not wish to be good.

With my mother, it was quite different. She had the joy of life, she was sensitive to every aspect of the world; she felt the sunshine before it came, and knew from what quarter the wind was blowing when she awoke in the morning. I think she was never indifferent to any moment that ever passed her by; I think no moment ever passed her by without being seized in all the eagerness of acceptance. I never knew her when she was not delicate, so delicate that she could rarely go out of doors in the winter; but I never heard her complain, she was always happy, with a natural gaiety which had only been strengthened into a kind of vivid peace by the continual presence of a religion at once calm and passionate. She was as sure of God as of my father; heaven was always as real to her as the room in which she laughed and prayed. Sometimes, as she read her Bible, her face quickened to an ecstasy. She was ready at any moment to lay down the book and attend to the meanest household duties; she never saw any gulf between meditation and action; her meditations were all action. When a child, she had lain awake, longing to see a ghost; she had never seen one, but if a ghost had entered the room she would have talked with it as tranquilly as with a living friend. To her the past, the present, and the future were but moments of one existence; life was everything to her, and life was indestructible. Her own personal life was so vivid that it never ceased, even in sleep. She dreamed every night, precise, elaborate dreams, which she would tell us in the morning with the same clearness as if she were telling us of something that had really happened. She was never drowsy, she went to sleep the moment her head was laid on the pillow, she awoke instantly wide awake. There were things that she knew and things that she did not know, but she was never vague. A duty was as clear to her as a fact; infinitely tolerant to others, she expected from herself perfection, the utmost perfection of which her nature was capable. It was because my mother talked to me of the other world that I felt, in spite of myself, that there was another world. Her certainty helped to make me the more afraid.

She did not often talk to me of the other world. She preferred that I should see it reflected in her celestial temper and in a capability as of the angels. She sorrowed at my indifference, but she was content to wait; she was sure of me, she never doubted that, sooner or later, I should be saved. This, too, troubled me. I did not want to be saved. It is true that I did not want to go to hell, but the thought of what my parents meant by salvation had no attraction for me. It seemed to be the giving up of all that I cared for. There was a sort of humiliation in it. Jesus Christ seemed to me a hard master.

Sometimes there were revival services at the church, and I was never quite at my ease until they were over. I was afraid of some appeal to my emotions, which for the moment I should not be able to resist. I knew that it would mean nothing, but I did not want to give in, even for a moment. I felt that I might have to resist with more than my customary indifference, and I did not like to admit to myself that any active resistance could be necessary. I knelt, as a stormy prayer shook the people about me into tears, rigid, forcing myself to think of something else. I saw the preacher move about the church, speaking to one after another, and I saw one after another get up and walk to the communion rail, in sign of conversion. I wondered that they could do it, whatever they felt; I wondered what they felt; I dreaded lest the preacher should come up to me with some irresistible power, and beckon me up to that rail. If he did come, I knelt motionless, with my face in my hands, not answering his questions, not seeming to take the slightest notice of him; but my heart was trembling, I did not know what was going to happen; I felt nothing but that horrible uneasiness, but I feared it might leave me helpless, at the man's mercy, or at God's perhaps.

As we walked home afterwards, I could see the others looking at me, wondering at my spiritual stubbornness, wondering if at last I had felt something. To them, I knew, I was like a man who shut his eyes and declared that he could not see. 'You have only to open your eyes,' they said to the man. But the man said, 'I prefer being blind.' It was inexplicable to them. But they were not less inexplicable to me.

III.

From the time when 'Don Quixote' first opened my eyes to an imaginative world outside myself, I had read hungrily; but another world was also opened to me when I was about sixteen. I had been taught scales and exercises on the piano; I had tried to learn music, with very little success, when one day the head-master of the school asked me to go into his drawing-room and copy out something for him. As I sat there copying, the music-master, a German, came in and sat down at the piano. He played something which I had never heard before, something which seemed to me the most wonderful thing I had ever heard. I tried to go on copying, but I did not know what I was writing down; I was caught into an ecstasy, the sound seemed to envelop me like a storm, and then to trickle through me like rain-drops shaken from wet leaves, and then to wrap me again in a tempest which was like a tempest of grief. When he had finished I said, 'Will you play that over again?'

As he played it again I began to distinguish it more clearly; I heard a slow, heavy trampling of feet, marching in order, then what might have been the firing of cannon over a grave, and the trampling again. When he told me that it was Chopin's Funeral March, I understood why it was that the feet had moved so slowly, and why the cannon had been fired; and I saw that the melody which had soothed me was the timid, insinuating consolation which love or hope sometimes brings to the mourner. I asked him if he would teach me music and if he would teach me that piece. He promised to teach me that piece, and I learned it. I learned no more scales and exercises; I learned a few more pieces; but in a little while I could read at sight; and when I was not reading a book I was reading a piece of music at the piano. I never acquired the technique to play a single piece correctly, but I learned to touch the piano as if one were caressing a living being, and it answered me in an intimate and affectionate voice.

Books and music, then, together with my solitary walks, were the only means of escape which I was able to find from the tedium of things as they were. I was passionately in love with life, but the life I lived was not the life I wanted. I did not know quite what I wanted, but I knew that what I wanted was something very different from what I endured. We were very poor, and I hated the constraints of poverty. We were surrounded by commonplace, middle-class people, and I hated commonplace and the middle classes. Sometimes we were too poor even to have a servant, and I was expected to clean my own boots. I could not endure getting my hands or my shirt-cuffs dirty; the thought of having to do it disgusted me every day. Sometimes my mother, without saying anything to me, had cleaned my boots for me. I was scarcely conscious of the sacrifices which she and the others were continually making. I made none, of my own accord, and I felt aggrieved if I had to share the smallest of their privations.

From as early a time as I can remember, I had no very clear consciousness of anything external to myself; I never realised that others had the right to expect from me any return for the kindness which they might show me or refuse to me, at their choice. I existed, others also existed; but between us there was an impassable gulf, and I had rarely any desire to cross it. I was very fond of my mother, but I felt no affection towards any one else, nor any desire for the affection of others. To be let alone, and to live my own life for ever, that was what I wanted; and I raged because I could never entirely escape from the contact of people who bored me and things which depressed me. If people called, I went out of the room before they were shown in; if I had not time to get away, I shook hands hurriedly, and slipped out as soon as I could. I remember a cousin who used to come to tea every Sunday for two or three years. My aversion to her was so great that I could hardly answer her if she spoke to me, and I used to think of Shelley, and how he too, like me, would 'lie back and languish into hate.' The woman was quite inoffensive, but I am still unable to see her or hear her speak without that sickness of aversion which used to make the painfulness of Sunday more painful.

People in general left me no more than indifferent; they could be quietly avoided. They meant no more to me than the chairs on which they sat; I was untouched by their fortunes; I was unconscious of my human relationship to them. To my mother every person in the world became, for the moment of contact, the only person in the world; if she merely talked with any one for five minutes she was absorbed to the exclusion of every other thought; she saw no one else, she heard nothing else. I watched her, with astonishment, with admiration; I felt that she was in the right and I in the wrong; that she gained a pleasure and conferred a benefit, while I only wearied myself and offended others; but I could not help it. I felt nothing, I saw nothing, outside myself.

I always had a room upstairs, which I called my study, where I could sit alone, reading or thinking. No one was allowed to enter the room; only, in winter, as I always let the fire go out, my mother would now and then steal in gently without speaking, and put more coals on the fire. I used to look up from my books furiously, and ask why I could not be left alone; my mother would smile, say nothing, and go out as quietly as she had come in. I was only happy when I was in my study, but, when I had shut the door behind me, I forgot all about the tedious people who were calling downstairs, the covers of the book I was reading seemed to broaden out into an enclosing rampart, and I was alone with myself.

At my last school there was one master, a young man, who wrote for a provincial newspaper, of which he afterwards became the editor, with whom I made friends. He had read a great deal, and he knew a few literary people; he was equally fond of literature and of music. Some school composition of mine had interested him in me, and he began to lend me books, and to encourage me in trying to express myself in writing. I had already run through Scott and Byron, with a very little Shelley, and had come to Browning, whom he detested. When I was laid up with scarlatina he sent me over a packet of books to read; one of them was Swinburne's 'Poems and Ballads,' which seemed to give voice to all the fever that I felt just then in my blood. I read 'Wuthering Heights' at the same time and Rabelais a little time afterwards. I read all the bound volumes of the 'Cornhill Magazine' from the beginning right through, stories, essays, and poems, and I remember my delight in 'Harry Richmond,' at a time when I had never heard the name of George Meredith. I read essays signed 'R. L. S.', from which I got my first taste of a sort of gipsy element in literature which was to become a passion when, later on, 'Lavengro' fell into my hands. The reading of 'Lavengro' did many things for me. It absorbed me from the first page, with a curiously personal appeal, as of some one akin to me, and when I came to the place where Lavengro learns Welsh in a fortnight, I laid down the book with a feeling of fierce emulation. I had often thought of learning Italian: I immediately bought an Italian Bible, and a grammar; I worked all day long, not taking up 'Lavengro' again, until, at the end of the fortnight which I had given myself, I could read Italian. Then I finished 'Lavengro.'

'Lavengro'' took my thoughts into the open air, and gave me my first conscious desire to wander. I learned a little Romany, and was always on the lookout for gipsies. I realised that there were other people in the world besides the conventional people I knew, who wore prim and shabby clothes, and went to church twice on Sundays, and worked at business and professions, and sat down to the meal of tea at five o'clock in the afternoon. And I realised that there was another escape from these people besides a solitary flight in books; that if a book could be so like a man, there were men and women, after all, who had the interest of a book as well as the warm advantage of being alive. Humanity began to exist for me.

But with this discovery of a possible interest in real people, there came a deeper loathing of the people by whom I was surrounded. I had for the most part been able to ignore them; now I wanted to get away, so that I could live my own life, and choose my own companions. My vague notions of sex became precise, became a torture.

When I first read Rabelais and the 'Poems and Ballads,' I was ignorant of my own body; I looked upon the relationship of man and woman as something essentially wicked; my imagination took fire, but I was hardly conscious of any physical reality connected with it. I was irrepressibly timid in the presence of a woman; I hardly ever met young people of my own age; and I had a feeling of the deepest reverence for women, from which I endeavoured to banish the slightest consciousness of sex. I thought it an inexcusable disrespect; and in my feeling towards the one or two much older women who at one time or another had a certain attraction for me, there was nothing, conscious at least, but a purely romantic admiration. At the same time I had a guilty delight in reading books which told me about the sensations of physical love, and

I trembled with ecstacy as I read them. Thoughts of them haunted me; I put them out of my head by an effort, I called them back, they ended by never leaving me.

I think it was a little earlier than this that I began to walk in my sleep, and to have nightmares; but it was just then that I suffered most from those obscure terrors of the night. Once, when I was a child, I remember waking up in my nightshirt on the drawing-room sofa, and being wrapped up in a shawl and carried upstairs by my father, and put back into bed. I had come down in my sleep, opened the door, and walked into the room without seeing any one, and laid myself down on the sofa. I did not often dream, but, whenever I dreamed, it was of infinite spirals, up which I had to climb, or of ladders, whose rungs dropped away from me as my feet left them, or of slimy stone stairways into cold pits of darkness, or of the tightening of a snake's coils around me, or of walking with bare feet across a floor curdling with snakes. I awoke, stifling a scream, my hair damp with sweat, out of impossible tasks in which time shrank and swelled in some deadly game with life; something had to be done in a second, and all eternity passed, lingering, while the second poised over me like a drop of water always about to drip: it fell, and I was annihilated into depth under depth of blackness.

Into these dreams of abstract horror there began to come a disturbing element of sex. My books and my thoughts haunted me; I was restless and ignorant, physically innocent, but with a sort of naïve corruption of mind. All the interest which I had never been able to find in the soul, I found in what I only vaguely apprehended of the body. To me it was something remote, evil, mainly inexplicable; but nothing I had ever felt had meant so much to me. I never realised that there was any honesty in sex, that nature was after all natural. I reached stealthily after some stealthy delight of the senses, which I valued the more because it was a forbidden thing. Love I never associated with the senses, it was not even passion that I wanted; it was a conscious, subtle, elaborate sensuality, which I knew not how to procure. And there was an infinite curiosity, which I hardly even dared dream of satisfying; a curiosity which was like a fever. I was scarcely conscious of any external temptations. The ideas in which I had been trained, little as they had seemed consciously to affect me, had given me the equivalent of what I may call virtue, in a form of good taste. I was ashamed of my desires, of my sensations, though I made no serious effort to escape them; but I knew that, even if the opportunity were offered, something, some scruple of physical refinement, some timidity, some unattached sense of fitness, would step in to prevent me from carrying them into practice.

IV.

Every now and then my father used to talk to me seriously, saying that I should have to choose some profession, and make my own living. I always replied that there was nothing I could possibly do, that I hated every profession, that I would rather starve than soil my hands with business, and that so long as I could just go on living as I was then living, I wanted nothing more. I did not want to be a rich man, I was never able to realise money as a tangible thing, I wanted to have just enough to live on, only not at home; in London. My father did not press the matter; I could see that he dreaded my leaving home, and he knew that, for the time, going to London was out of the question.

One summer I went down to a remote part of England to stay with some of my relations. I had seen none of them since I was a child, I knew nothing about them, except that some were farmers, some business people; there was an astronomer, an old sea-captain, and a mad uncle who lived in a cottage by himself on a moor near the sea, and grew marvellous flowers in a vast garden. I stayed with a maiden aunt, who was like a very old and very gaunt little bird; she was deaf, wrinkled, and bent, but her hair was still yellow, her voice a high piping treble, and she ran about with the tireless vivacity of a young girl. She had been pretty, and had all the little vanities of a coquette; she wore bright, semi-fashionable clothes, and conspicuous hats. She had much of the natural gaiety of my mother, who was her elder sister; and she was infinitely considerate to me, turning out one of her little rooms that I might have it for a study. She liked me to play to her, and would sit by the side of the old piano listening eagerly. The mad uncle was her brother, and he would come in sometimes from his cottage, bringing great bundles of flowers. He was very kind and gentle, and he would sometimes tell me of the letters he had been writing to the Prince of Wales on the subject of sewage, and of how the Prince of Wales had acknowledged his communications. He had many theories about sewage; I have heard that some of them were plausible and ingenious; and he was convinced that his theories would some day be accepted, and that he would become famous. I believe his brain had been turned by an unlucky passion for a beautiful girl; he was only in an asylum for a short time; and for the most part lived happily in his cottage among his flowers, developing theories of sewage, and taking sun-baths naked in the garden.

The people of whom I saw most were some cousins: the father kept a shop, and they all helped in the business. They were very kind, and did all they could for me by feeding me plentifully and taking me for long drives in the country, which was very hilly and wooded, and sometimes to the sea, which was not too far off to reach by driving. We had not an idea in common, and I always wondered how it was possible that my aunt, who was my mother's eldest sister, could ever have married my uncle. He was a kind man, and, in his way, intelligent; but he talked incessantly, insistently, and with something unctuous in his voice and manner; he came close to me while he spoke, and tapped my shoulder with his fingers or my leg with his stick. I could not bear him to touch me; sometimes he dropped his h's, and, as I heard them drop, I saw the old man looking fixedly into my face with his large, keen, shifting eyes.

One of the daughters had something inquiring in her mind, a touch of rebellious refinement; she had enough instinct for another kind of life to be at least discontented with her own; with her I could talk. But the others fitted into their environment without a crease or a ruffle. They went to the shop early in the morning, slaved there all day, taught in the Sunday-School on Sundays, said the obvious things to one another all day long, were perfectly content to be where they were, do what they did, think what they thought, and say what they said. Their house reflected them like a mirror. Everything was clean and new, there was plenty of everything; and I used to sit in their drawing-room looking round it in a vain attempt to find a single thing which I could have lived with, in a house of my own.

I went home from the visit gladly, glad to be at home again. We were living then in the Midlands, and I used to spend whole days at Kenilworth, at Warwick, at Coventry ; I knew them from Scott's novels, but I had never seen a ruined castle, a city with ancient buildings, and I began to feel that there was something else to be seen in the world besides the things I had dreamed of seeing. I took a boat at Leamington, and rowed up the river as far as the chain underneath Warwick Castle. I do not know why I have always remembered that moment, as if it marked a date to me. It was with a full enjoyment of the contrast that I found them busy preparing for a *fête* when I got back to Leamington; stringing up the Chinese lanterns to the branches of the trees, and putting out little tables on the grass. At Coventry I loved going through the narrow streets, looking up at the windows which leaned together under their gabled roofs. I saw Lady Godiva borne through the streets, more clothed than she appears in the pictures, in the midst of a gay and solemn procession, tricked out in old-fashioned frippery. And I spent a long day there, one of the days of the five-day fair, which feasted me with sensations on which I lived for weeks. It was the first time I had ever plunged boldly into what Baudelaire calls 'the bath of multitude'; it intoxicated me, and seemed, for the first time in my life, to carry me outside myself. I pushed my way through the crowds in those old and narrow streets, in an ecstasy of delight at all that movement, noise, colour, and confusion. I seemed suddenly to have become free, in contact with life. I had no desire to touch it too closely, no fear of being soiled at its contact; a vivid spirit of life seemed to come to me, in my solitude, releasing me from thought, from daily realities.

Once I went as far as Chester. It was the Cup day, and there was an excursion. I watched the race, feeling a momentary excitement as the horses passed close to me, and the pellets of turf shot from their heels into the air above my head; the crowd was more varied than any crowd I had ever seen, and I discovered a blonde gipsy girl, in charge of a cocoanut-shy, who let me talk a little Romany with her. I thought Chester, with its arcades and its city-walls, the most wonderful old place I had ever seen. As I walked round the wall, a woman leaned out of a window and called to me : I thought of Rahab in the Bible, and went home dreaming romantically about the harlot on the wall.

One day, as I was walking along a country road, I was stopped by a sailor, who asked me how far it was to some distant place. He was carrying a small bundle, and was walking, he told me, until he came to a certain sea-port. He did not beg, but accepted gladly enough what I gave him. He had been on many voyages, and had picked up a good many words of different languages, which he mispronounced in a scarcely intelligible jargon of his own. He had been left behind by his ship in Russia, where he had stayed on account of a woman : she could speak no English, and he but little Russian ; but it did not seem to have mattered. It was the first time I had seemed to come so close to the remote parts of the world ; and as he went on his way, he turned back to urge me to go on some voyage which he seemed to remember with more pleasure than any other: to the West Indies, I think. I began to pore over maps, and plan to what parts of the world I would go.

Meanwhile, little by little, I was beginning to live my own life at home; I played the piano on Sundays, to whatever tune I liked; I read whatever I liked on Sundays; and, finally, I ceased to go to church. Latterly I had come to put my boredom there to some purpose: I followed the lessons word by word in Bibles and Testaments in many languages, and, while the sermon was going on I kept my Bible quietly open on my knees, and read on, chapter after chapter, while the preacher preached I knew not what : I never heard a word of it, not even the text. I read, not for the Bible's sake, but to learn the language in which I was reading it. My parents knew this, but after all it was the Bible, and they could hardly object to my reading the Bible. Sometimes I scribbled down ideas that came into my head; sometimes I merely sat there, with a stony inattention, showing, I fancy, in my face, all the fierce disgust that I felt. During the sermon I always found it quite easy to abstract my attention; during the hymns I amused myself by criticising the bad rhymes and false metaphors; but during prayer-time, though I kept my eyes wide open, and sat as upright as I dared, I could hardly help hearing what was said. What was said, very often, made me ashamed, as if I were unconsciously helping to repeat absurdities to God.

When I told my parents that I could go to church no longer, I had no definite reason to allege, except that the matter did not interest me. I did not doubt the truth of the Christian religion; I neither affirmed nor denied; it was something, to me, beside the question. I could argue about dogma; I defended a liberal interpretation of doctrines; I insisted that there were certain questions which we were bound to leave open. But I was not alienated from Christianity by intellectual difficulties; it had never taken hold of me, and I gave up nothing but a pretence in giving up the sign of outward respect for it. My parents were deeply grieved, but, then as always, they respected my liberty.

The first time I remember going to London, for I had been there when a child, was by an excursion, which brought me back the same night. Of the day, or of what I did then, I can recall nothing; daylight never meant so much to me as the first lighting of the lamps. I found my way back to King's Cross, in some bewilderment, to find that one train had gone, and that the next would leave me an hour or two more in London. I walked among the lights, through hurrying crowds of people, in long, dingy streets, not knowing where I was going, till I found myself outside a great building which seemed to be a kind of music-hall. I went in; it was the Agricultural Hall, and some show was being given there. There were acrobats, gymnasts, equilibrists, performing beasts ; there was a vast din, concentrating all the noises of a fair within four walls; people swarmed to and fro over the long floor, paying more heed to one another than to the performance. I scrutinised the show and the people, a little uneasily; it was very new to me, and I was not yet able to feel at home in London. I found my way to the station like one who comes home, half dizzy and half ashamed, after a debauch.

The next time I went to London, I went for a week. I stayed in a lodging-house near the British Museum, a mean, uncomfortable place, where I had to be indoors by midnight. During the day I read in the Museum ; the atmosphere weighed upon me, and gave me a headache every day; the same atmosphere weighed upon me in the streets around the Museum; I was dull, depressed, anxious to get through with the task for which I had come to London, anxious to get back again to the country. I went back with a little book-learning, of the kind that I wanted to acquire; I began to have books sent down to me from a Library in London; I worked, more and more diligently, at reading and studying books; and I began to think of devoting myself entirely to some sort of literary work. It was not that I had anything to say, or that I felt the need of expressing myself. I wanted to write books for the sake of writing books; it was food for my ambition, and it gave me something to do when I was alone, apart from other people. It helped to raise another barrier between me and other people.

I went up to London again for a longer visit, and I stayed in a lodging-house in one of the streets leading from the Strand to the Embankment, near the stage-door of one of the theatres. A little actress and her mother were staying in the house, and I felt that I was getting an intimate acquaintance with the stage, as I sat up with the little actress, after her mother had gone to bed, and listened timidly to her stories of parts and dresses and the other girls. She was quite young, and still ingenuous enough to look forward to the day when she would have her name on the placards in letters I forget how many inches high. I had been to my first theatre, it was Irving in 'King Lear,' and now I was hearing about the stage from one who lived on it. A little actress, afterwards famous for her beauty, and then a child with masses of gold hair about her ears, lived next door, at another lodging-house, which her mother kept. I watched for her to pass the window, or for a chance of meeting her in the street. When I went back again to the country, it was with a fixed resolve to come and live in London, where, it seemed, I could, if I liked, be something more than a spectator of the great, amusing crowd. The intoxication of London had got hold of me; I felt at home in it, and I felt that I had never yet found anywhere to be at home in.

I lived in London for five years, and I do not think there was a day during those five years in which I did not find a conscious delight in the mere fact of being in London. When I found myself alone, and in the midst of a crowd, I began to be astonishingly happy. I needed so little at the beginning of that time. I have never been able to stay long under a roof without restlessness, and I used to go out into the streets, many times a day, for the pleasure of finding myself in the open air and in the streets. I had never cared greatly for the open air in the country, the real open air, because everything in the country, except the sea, bored me ; but here, in the 'motley' Strand, among these hurrying people, under the smoky sky, I could walk and yet watch. If there ever was a religion of the eyes, I have devoutly practised that religion. I noted every face that passed me on the pavement; I looked into the omnibuses, the cabs, always with the same eager hope of seeing some beautiful or interesting person, some gracious movement, a delicate expression, which would be gone if I did not catch it as it went. This search without an aim grew to be almost a torture to me; my eyes ached with the effort, but I could not control them. At every moment, I knew, some spectacle awaited them ; I grasped at all these sights with the same futile energy as a dog that I once saw standing in an Irish stream, and snapping at the bubbles that ran continually past him on the water. Life ran past me continually, and I tried to make all its bubbles my own.

ESTHER KAHN.

ESTHER KAHN

Esther Kahn was born in one of those dark, evil-smelling streets with strange corners which lie about the Docks. It was a quiet street, which seemed to lead nowhere, but to stand aside, for some not quite honest purpose of its own. The blinds of some of these houses were always drawn; shutters were nailed over some of the windows. Few people passed; there were never many children playing in the road; the women did not stand talking at their open doors. The doors opened and shut quietly; dark faces looked out from behind the windows; the Jews who lived there seemed always to be at work, bending over their tables, sewing and cutting, or else hurrying in and out with bundles of clothes under their arms, going and coming from the tailors for whom they worked. The Kahns all worked at tailoring: Esther's father and mother and grandmother, her elder brother and her two elder sisters. One did seaming, another button-holing, another sewed on buttons; and, on the poor pay they got for that, seven had to live.

As a child Esther had a strange terror of the street in which she lived. She was never sure whether something dreadful had just happened there, or whether it was just going to happen. But she was always in suspense. She was tormented with the fear of knowing what went on behind those nailed shutters. She made up stories about the houses, but the stories never satisfied her. She imagined some great, vague gesture; not an incident, but a gesture; and it hung in the air suspended like a shadow. The gestures of people always meant more to her than their words; they seemed to have a secret meaning of their own, which the words never quite interpreted. She was always unconsciously on the watch for their meaning.

At night, after supper, the others used to sit around the table, talking eagerly. Esther would get up and draw her chair into the corner by the door, and for a time she would watch them, as if she were looking on at something, something with which she had no concern, but which interested her for its outline and movement. She saw her father's keen profile, the great, hooked nose, the black, prominent, shifty eye, the tangled black hair straggling over the shirt-collar; her mother, large, placid, with masses of black, straight hair coiled low over her sallow cheeks; the two sisters, sharp and voluble, never at rest for a moment; the brother, with his air of insolent assurance, an immense self-satisfaction hooded under his beautifully curved eyelids; the grandmother, with her bent and mountainous shoulders, the vivid malice of her eyes, her hundreds of wrinkles. All these people, who had so many interests in common, who thought of the same things, cared for the same things, seemed so fond of one another in an instinctive way, with so much hostility for other people who were not belonging to them, sat there night after night, in the same attitudes, always as eager for the events of to-day as they had been for the events of yesterday. Everything mattered to them immensly, and especially their part in things; and no one thing seemed to matter more than any other thing. Esther cared only to look on; nothing mattered to her; she had no interest in their interests; she was not sure that she cared for them more than she would care for other people; they were what she supposed real life was, and that was a thing in which she had only a disinterested curiosity.

Sometimes, when she had been watching them until they had all seemed to fade away and form again in a kind of vision more precise than the reality, she would lose sight of them altogether and sit gazing straight before her, her eyes wide open, her lips parted. Her hand would make an unconscious movement, as if she were accompanying some grave words with an appropriate gesture; and Becky would generally see it, and burst into a mocking laugh, and ask her whom she was mimicking.

'Don't notice her,' the mother said once; 'she's not a human child, she's a monkey; she's clutching out after a soul, as they do. They look like little men, but they know they're not men, and they try to be; that's why they mimic us.'

Esther was very angry; she said to herself that she would be more careful in future not to show anything that she was feeling.

At thirteen Esther looked a woman. She was large-boned, with very small hands and feet, and her body seemed to be generally asleep, in a kind of brooding lethargy. She had her mother's hair, masses of it, but softer, with a faint, natural wave in it. Her face was oval, smooth in outline, with a nose just Jewish enough for the beauty of suave curves and unemphatic outlines. The lips were thick, red, strung like a bow. The whole face seemed to await, with an infinite patience, some moulding and awakening force, which might have its way with it. It wanted nothing, anticipated nothing; it waited. Only the eyes put life into the mask, and the eyes were the eyes of the tribe; they had no personal meaning in what seemed to be their mystery; they were ready to fascinate innocently, to be intolerably ambiguous without intention; they were fathomless with mere sleep, the unconscious dream which is in the eyes of animals.

Esther was neither clever nor stupid; she was inert. She did as little in the house as she could, but when she had to take her share in the stitching she stitched more neatly than any of the others, though very slowly. She hated it, in her languid, smouldering way, partly because it was work and partly because it made her prick her fingers, and the skin grew hard and ragged where the point of the needle had scratched it. She liked her skin to be quite smooth, but all the glycerine she rubbed into it at night would not take out the mark of the needle. It seemed to her like the badge of her slavery.

She would rather not have been a Jewess; that, too, was a kind of badge, marking her out from other people; she wanted to be let alone, to have her own way without other people's help or hindrance. She had no definite consciousness of what her own way was to be; she was only conscious, as yet, of the ways that would certainly not be hers.

She would not think only of making money, like her mother, nor of being thought clever, like Becky, nor of being admired because she had good looks and dressed smartly, like Mina. All these things required an effort, and Esther was lazy. She wanted to be admired, and to have money, of course, and she did not want people to think her stupid; but all this was to come to her, she knew, because of some fortunate quality in herself, as yet undiscovered. Then she would shake off everything that now clung to her, like a worn-out garment that one keeps only until one can replace it. She saw herself rolling away in a carriage towards the west; she would never come back. And it would be like a revenge on whatever it was that kept her stifling in this mean street; she wanted to be cruelly revenged.

As it was, her only very keen pleasure was in going to the theatre with her brother or her sisters; she cared nothing for the music-halls, and preferred staying at home to going with the others when they went to the Pavilion or the Foresters.

But when there was a melodrama at the Standard, or at the Elephant and Castle, she would wait and struggle outside the door and up the narrow, winding stairs, for a place as near the front of the gallery as she could get. Once inside, she would never speak, but she would sit staring at the people on the stage as if they hypnotised her. She never criticised the play, as the others did; the play did not seem to matter; she lived in it without will or choice, merely because it was there and her eyes were on it.

But after it was over and they were at home again, she would become suddenly voluble as she discussed the merits of the acting. She had no hesitations, was certain that she was always in the right, and became furious if any one contradicted her. She saw each part as a whole, and she blamed the actors for not being consistent with themselves. She could not understand how they could make a mistake. It was so simple, there were no two ways of doing anything. To go wrong was as if you said no when you meant yes; it must be wilful.

'You ought to do it yourself, Esther,' said her sisters, when they were tired of her criticisms. They meant to be satirical, but Esther said, seriously enough: 'Yes, I could do it; but so could that woman if she would let herself alone. Why did she try to be something else all the time?'

Time went slowly with Esther; but when she was seventeen she was still sewing at home and still waiting. Nothing had come to her of all that she had expected. Two of her cousins, and a neighbour or two, had wanted to marry her; but she had refused them contemptuously. To her sluggish instinct men seemed only good for making money, or, perhaps, children; they had not come to have any definite personal meaning for her. A little man called Joel, who had talked to her passionately about love, and had cried when she refused him, seemed to her an unintelligible and ridiculous kind of animal. When she dreamed of the future, there was never any one of that sort making fine speeches to her.

But, gradually, her own real purpose in life had become clear. She was to be an actress. She said nothing about it at home, but she began to go round to the managers of the small theatres in the neighbourhood, asking for an engagement. After a long time the manager gave her a small part. The piece was called 'The Wages of Sin,' and she was to be the servant who opens the door in the first act to the man who is going to be the murderer in the second act, and then identifies him in the fourth act.

Esther went home quietly and said nothing until supper-time. Then she said to her mother: 'I am going on the stage.'

'That's very likely,' said her mother, with a sarcastic smile; 'and when do you go on, pray?'

'On Monday night,' said Esther.

'You don't mean it!' said her mother.

'Indeed I mean it,' said Esther, 'and I've got my part. I'm to be the servant in "The Wages of Sin."'

Her brother laughed. 'I know,' he said, 'she speaks two words twice.'

'You are right,' said Esther; 'will you come on Monday, and hear how I say them?'

When Esther had made up her mind to do anything, they all knew that she always did it. Her father talked to her seriously. Her mother said: 'You are much too lazy, Esther; you will never get on.' They told her that she was taking the bread out of their mouths, and it was certain she would never put it back again. 'If I get on,' said Esther, 'I will pay you back exactly what I would have earned, as long as you keep me. Is that a bargain? I know I shall get on, and you won't repent of it. You had better let me do as I want. It will pay.'

They shook their heads, looked at Esther, who sat there with her lips tight shut, and a queer, hard look in her eyes, which were trying not to seem exultant; they looked at one another, shook their heads again, and consented. The old grandmother mumbled something fiercely, but as it sounded like bad words, and they never knew what Old Testament language she would use, they did not ask her what she was meaning.

On Monday Esther made her first appearance on the stage. Her mother said to her afterwards: 'I thought nothing of you, Esther; you were just like any ordinary servant.' Becky asked her if she had felt nervous. She shook her head; it had seemed quite natural to her, she said. She did not tell them that a great wave of triumph had swept over her as she felt the heat of the gas footlights come up into her eyes, and saw the floating cluster of white faces rising out of a solid mass of indistinguishable darkness. In that moment she drew into her nostrils the breath of life.

Esther had a small part to understudy, and before long she had the chance of playing it. The manager said nothing to her, but soon afterwards he told her to understudy a more important part. She never had the chance to play it, but, when the next piece was put on at the theatre, she was given a part of her own. She began to make a little money, and, as she had promised, she paid so much a week to her parents for keeping her. They gained by the bargain, so they did not ask her to come back to the stitching. Mrs. Kahn sometimes spoke of her daughter to the neighbours with a certain languid pride; Esther was making her way.

Esther made her way rapidly. One day the manager of a West End theatre came down to see her; he engaged her at once to play a small but difficult part in an ambitious kind of melodrama that he was bringing out. She did it well, satisfied the manager, was given a better part, did that well, too, was engaged by another manager, and, in short, began to be looked upon as a promising actress. The papers praised her with moderation; some of the younger critics, who admired her type, praised her more than she deserved. She was making money; she had come to live in rooms of her own, off the Strand; at twenty-one she had done, in a measure, what she wanted to do; but she was not satisfied with herself. She had always known that she could act, but how well could she act? Would she never be able to act any better than this? She had drifted into the life of the stage as naturally as if she had never known anything else; she was at home, comfortable, able to do what many others could not do. But she wanted to be a great actress.

An old actor, a Jew, Nathan Quellen, who had taken a kind of paternal interest in her, and who helped her with all the good advice that he had never taken to himself, was fond of saying that the remedy was in her own hands.

'My dear Esther,' he would tell her, smoothing his long grey hair down over his forehead, 'you must take a lover; you must fall in love; there's no other way. You think you can act, and you have never felt anything worse than a cut finger. Why, it's an absurdity! Wait till you know the only thing worth knowing; till then you're in short frocks and a pinafore.'

He cited examples, he condensed the biographies of the great actresses for her benefit. He found one lesson in them all, and he was sincere in his reading of history as he saw it. He talked, argued, protested; the matter seriously troubled him. He felt he was giving Esther good advice; he wanted her to be the thing she wanted to be. Esther knew it and thanked him, without smiling; she sat brooding over his words; she never argued against them. She believed much of what he said; but was the remedy, as he said, in her own hands? It did not seem so.

As yet no man had spoken to her blood. She had the sluggish blood of a really profound animal nature. She saw men calmly, as calmly as when little Joel had cried because she would not marry him. Joel still came to see her sometimes, with the same entreaty in his eyes, not daring to speak it. Other men, very different men, had made love to her in very different ways. They had seemed to be trying to drive a hard bargain, to get the better of her in a matter of business; and her native cunning had kept her easily on the better side of the bargain. She was resolved to be a business woman in the old trade of the affections; no one should buy or sell of her except at her own price, and she set the price vastly high.

Yet Quellen's words set her thinking. Was there, after all, but one way to study for the stage? All the examples pointed to it, and, what was worse, she felt it might be true. She saw exactly where her acting stopped short.

She looked around her with practical eyes, not seeming to herself to be doing anything unusual or unlikely to succeed in its purpose. She thought deliberately over all the men she knew; but who was there whom it would be possible to take seriously? She could think of only one man: Philip Haygarth.

Philip Haygarth was a man of five-and-thirty, who had been writing plays and having them acted, with only a moderate success, for nearly ten years. He was one of the accepted men, a man whose plays were treated respectfully, and he had the reputation of being much cleverer than his plays. He was short, dark, neat, very worldly-looking, with thin lips and reflective, not quite honest eyes. His manner was cold, restrained, with a mingling of insolence and diffidence. He was a hard worker and a somewhat deliberately hard liver. He avoided society and preferred to find his relaxation among people with whom one did not need to keep up appearances, or talk sentiment, or pay afternoon calls. He admired Esther Kahn as an actress, though with many reservations; and he admired her as a woman, more than he had ever admired anybody else. She appealed to all his tastes; she ended by absorbing almost the whole of those interests and those hours which he set apart, in his carefully arranged life, for such matters.

He made love to Esther much more skilfully than any of her other lovers, and, though she saw through his plans as clearly as he wished her to see through them, she was grateful to him for a certain finesse in his manner of approach. He never mentioned the word 'love,' except to jest at it; he concealed even the extent to which he was really disturbed by her presence; his words spoke only of friendship and of general topics. And yet there could never be any doubt as to his meaning; his whole attitude was a patient waiting. He interested her; frankly, he interested her: here, then, was the man for her purpose. With his admirable tact, he spared her the least difficulty in making her meaning clear. He congratulated himself on a prize; she congratulated herself on the accomplishment of a duty.

Days and weeks passed, and Esther scrutinised herself with a distinct sense of disappointment. She had no moral feeling in the matter; she was her own property, it had always seemed to her, free to dispose of as she pleased. The business element in her nature persisted. This bargain, this infinitely important bargain, had been concluded, with open eyes, with a full sense of responsibility, for a purpose, the purpose for which she lived. What was the result?

She could see no result. The world had in no sense changed for her, as she had been supposing it would change; a new excitement had come into her life, and that was all. She wondered what it was that a woman was expected to feel under the circumstances, and why she had not felt it. How different had been her feeling when she walked across the stage for the first time! That had really been a new life, or the very beginning of life. But this was no more than a delightful episode, hardly to be disentangled from the visit to Paris which had accompanied it. She had, so to speak, fallen into a new habit, which was so agreeable, and seemed so natural, that she could not understand why she had not fallen into it before; it was a habit she would certainly persist in, for its own sake. The world remained just the same.

And her art: she had learned nothing. No new thrill came into the words she spoke; her eyes, as they looked across the footlights, remembered nothing, had nothing new to tell.

And so she turned, with all the more interest, an interest almost impersonal, to Philip Haygarth when he talked to her about acting and the drama, when he elaborated his theories which, she was aware, occupied him more than she occupied him. He was one of those creative critics who can do every man's work but their own. When he sat down to write his own plays, something dry and hard came into the words, the life ebbed out of those imaginary people who had been so real to him, whom he had made so real to others as he talked. He constructed admirably and was an unerring judge of the construction of plays. And he had a sense of acting which was like the sense that a fine actor might have, if he could be himself and also some one looking on at himself. He not only knew what should be done, but exactly why it should be done. Little suspecting that he had been chosen for the purpose, though in so different a manner, he set himself to teach her art to Esther.

He made her go through the great parts with him; she was Juliet, Lady Macbeth, Cleopatra; he taught her how to speak verse and how to feel the accent of speech in verse, another kind of speech than prose speech; he trained her voice to take hold of the harmonies that lie in words themselves; and she caught them, by ear, as one born to speak many languages catches a foreign language. She went through Ibsen as she had gone through Shakespeare; and Haygarth showed her how to take hold of this very different subject-matter, so definite and so elusive. And they studied good acting-plays together, worthless plays that gave the actress opportunities to create something out of nothing. Together they saw Duse and Sarah Bernhardt; and they had seen Réjane in Paris, in crudely tragic parts; and they studied the English stage, to find out why it maintained itself at so stiff a distance from nature. She went on acting all the time, always acting with more certainty ; and at last she attempted more serious parts, which she learned with Haygarth at her elbow.

She had to be taught her part as a child is taught its lesson; word by word, intonation by intonation. She read it over, not really knowing what it was about; she learned it by heart mechanically, getting the words into her memory first. Then the meaning had to be explained to her, scene by scene, and she had to say the words over until she had found the right accent. Once found, she never forgot it; she could repeat it identically at any moment; there were no variations to allow for. Until that moment she was reaching out blindly in the dark, feeling about her with uncertain fingers.

And, with her, the understanding came with the power of expression, sometimes seeming really to proceed from the sound to the sense, from the gesture inward. Show her how it should be done, and she knew why it should be done; sound the right note in her ears, arrest her at the moment when the note came right, and she understood, by a backward process, why the note should sound thus. Her mind worked, but it worked under suggestion, as the hypnotists say; the idea had to come to her through the instinct, or it would never come.

As Esther found herself, almost unconsciously, becoming what she had dreamed of becoming, what she had longed to become, and, after all, through Philip Haygarth, a more personal feeling began to grow up in her heart toward this lover who had found his way to her, not through the senses, but through the mind. A kind of domesticity had crept into their relations, and this drew Esther nearer to him. She began to feel that he belonged to her. He had never, she knew, been wholly absorbed in her, and she had delighted him by showing no jealousy, no anxiety to keep him. As long as she remained so, he felt that she had a sure hold on him. But now she began to change, to concern herself more with his doings, to assert her right to him, as she had never hitherto cared to do. He chafed a little at what seemed an unnecessary devotion.

Love, with Esther, had come slowly, taking his time on the journey; but he came to take possession. To work at her art was to please Philip Haygarth; she worked now with a double purpose. And she made surprising advances as an actress. People began to speculate: had she genius, or was this only an astonishingly developed talent, which could go so far and no farther?

For, in this finished method, which seemed so spontaneous and yet at the same time so deliberate, there seemed still to be something, some slight, essential thing, almost unaccountably lacking. What was it? Was it a fundamental lack, that could never be supplied? Or would that slight, essential thing, as her admirers prophesied, one day be supplied? They waited.

Esther was now really happy, for the first time in her life; and as she looked back over those years, in the street by the Docks, when she had lived alone in the midst of her family, and since then, when she had lived alone, working, not finding the time long, nor wishing it to go more slowly, she felt a kind of surprise at herself. How could she have gone through it all? She had not even been bored. She had had a purpose, and now that she was achieving that purpose, the thing itself seemed hardly to matter. Her art kept pace with her life; she was giving up nothing in return for happiness; but she had come to prize the happiness, her love, beyond all things.

She knew that Haygarth was proud of her, that he looked upon her talent, genius, whatever it was, as partly the work of his hands. It pleased her that this should be so; it seemed to bind him to her more tightly.

In this she was mistaken, as most women are mistaken when they ask themselves what it is in them that holds their lovers. The actress interested Haygarth greatly, but the actress interested him as a problem, as something quite apart from his feelings as a man, as a lover. He had been attracted by the woman, by what was sombre and unexplained in her eyes, by the sleepy grace of her movements, by the magnetism that seemed to drowse in her. He had made love to her precisely as he would have made love to an ignorant, beautiful creature who walked on in some corner of a Drury Lane melodrama. On principle, he did not like clever women. Esther, it is true, was not clever, in the ordinary, tiresome sense; and her startling intuitions, in matters of acting, had not repelled him, as an exhibition of the capabilities of a woman, while they preoccupied him for a long time in that part of his brain which worked critically upon any interesting material. But nothing that she could do as an artist made the least difference to his feeling about her as a woman; his pride in her was like his pride in a play that he had written finely, and put aside; to be glanced at from time to time, with cool satisfaction. He had his own very deliberate theory of values, and one value was never allowed to interfere with another. A devoted, discreet amateur of woman, he appreciated women really for their own sakes, with an unflattering simplicity. And for a time Esther absorbed him almost wholly.

He had been quite content with their relations as they were before she fell seriously in love with him, and this new, profound feeling, which he had never even dreaded, somewhat disturbed him. She was adopting almost the attitude of a wife, and he had no ambition to play the part of a husband. The affections were always rather a strain upon him; he liked something a little less serious and a little more exciting.

Esther understood nothing that was going on in Philip Haygarth's mind, and when he began to seem colder to her, when she saw less of him, and then less, it seemed to her that she could still appeal to him by her art and still touch him by her devotion. As her warmth seemed more and more to threaten his liberty, the impulse to tug at his chain became harder to resist. His continued, unvarying interest in her acting, his patience in helping her, in working with her, kept her for some time from realising how little was left now of the more personal feeling. It was with sharp surprise, as well as with a blinding rage, that she discovered one day, beyond possibility of mistake, that she had a rival, and that Haygarth was only doling out to her the time left over from her rival.

It was an Italian, a young girl who had come over to London with an organ-grinder, and who posed for sculptors, when she could get a sitting. It was a girl who could barely read and write, an insignificant creature, a peasant from the Campagna, who had nothing but her good looks and the distinction of her attitudes. Esther was beside herself with rage, jealousy, mortification; she loved, and she could not pardon. There was a scene of unmeasured violence. Haygarth was cruel, almost with intention; and they parted, Esther feeling as if her life had been broken sharply in two.

She was at the last rehearsals of a new play by Haygarth, a play in which he had tried for once to be tragic in the bare, straightforward way of the things that really happen. She went through the rehearsals absent-mindedly, repeating her words, which he had taught her how to say, but scarcely attending to their meaning. Another thought was at work behind this mechanical speech, a continual throb of remembrance, going on monotonously. Her mind was full of other words, which she heard as if an inner voice were repeating them; her mind made up pictures, which seemed to pass slowly before her eyes: Haygarth and the other woman. At the last rehearsal Quellen came round to her, and, ironically as she thought, complimented her on her performance. She meant, when the night came, not to fail: that was all.

When the night came, she said to herself that she was calm, that she would be able to concentrate herself on her acting and act just as usual. But, as she stood in the wings, waiting for her moment to appear, her eyes went straight to the eyes of the other woman, the Italian model, the organ-grinder's girl, who sat, smiling contentedly, in the front of a box, turning her head sometimes to speak to some one behind her, hidden by the curtain. She was dressed in black, with a rose in her hair: you could have taken her for a lady; she was triumphantly beautiful. Esther shuddered as if she had been struck; the blood rushed into her forehead and swelled and beat against her eyes. Then, with an immense effort, she cleared her mind of everything but the task before her. Every nerve in her body lived with a separate life as she opened the door at the back of the stage, and stood, waiting for the applause to subside, motionless under the eyes of the audience. There was something in the manner of her entrance that seemed to strike the fatal note of the play. She had never been more restrained, more effortless; she seemed scarcely to be acting; only, a magnetic current seemed to have been set in motion between her and those who were watching her. They held their breaths, as if they were assisting at a real tragedy; as if, at any moment, this acting might give place to some horrible, naked passion of mere nature. The curtain rose and rose again at the end of the first act; and she stood there, bowing gravely, in what seemed a deliberate continuation, into that interval, of the sentiment of the piece. Her dresses were taken off her and put on her, for each act, as if she had been a lay-figure. Once, in the second act, she looked up at the box; the Italian woman was smiling emptily, but Haygarth, taking no notice of her, was leaning forward with his eyes fixed on the stage. After the third act he sent to Esther's dressing-room a fervent note, begging to be allowed to see her. She had made his play, he said, and she had made herself a great actress. She crumpled the note fiercely, put it carefully into her jewel-box, and refused to see him. In the last act she had to die, after the manner of the Lady of the Camellias, waiting for the lover who, in this case, never came. The pathos of her acting was almost unbearable, and, still, it seemed not like acting at all. The curtain went down on a great actress.

Esther went home stunned, only partly realising what she had done, or how she had done it. She read over the note from Haygarth, unforgivingly; and the long letter that came from him in the morning. As reflection returned, through all the confused suffering and excitement, to her deliberate, automatic nature, in which a great shock had brought about a kind of release, she realised that all she had wanted, during most of her life, had at last come about. The note had been struck, she had responded to it, as she responded to every suggestion, faultlessly; she knew that she could repeat the note, whenever she wished, now that she had once found it. There would be no variation to allow for, the actress was made at last. She might take back her lover, or never see him again, it would make no difference. It would make no difference, she repeated, over and over again, weeping uncontrollable tears.

CHRISTIAN TREVALGA.

CHRISTIAN TREVALGA.

He had never known what it was to feel the earth solid under his feet. And now, while he waited for the doctor who was to decide whether he might still keep his place in the world, and make what he could of all that remained to him of his life, the past began to come back to him, blurred a little in his memory, and with whole spaces blotted out of it, but in a steady return upon himself, as the past, it is said, comes back to a drowning man at the instant before death. There was that next step to take, the step that frightened him; was it into another, more painful, kind of oblivion? He was still an artist, his fingers were still his own; but had the man all gone out of him, the power to live for himself, when his fingers were no longer on the keyboard? That was to be decided; and the past was trying to make its own comment on the situation.

Christian Trevalga was born in a little sea-coast village in Cornwall, and the earliest thing he remembered was the sharp, creaking voice of the sea-gulls, as they swept past him at the edge of the cliff, high up over the sea. He was conscious of it, because it hurt him, sooner than he was conscious of the many voices of the sea, which, all through his childhood, sang out of the midst of all his dreams. Pain always meant more to him than pleasure, though, indeed, he was not always sure if the things that hurt him were not the things he cared for most.

He was thirty-six now, and he had never gone back to the village since he left it, at the age of sixteen, to come to London and try to win a scholarship at the College. His father was a gentleman, who had come down in the world; drink, gambling, and a low kind of debauchery brought him down; and when he came back from Spain in a certain year, sobered, something of a wreck, and married to a slow-witted Spanish woman whom he had found no one knew where, he had only an old-fashioned, untidy, but large and rambling, house on a cliff to live in, on the outskirts of a village, most of which had once belonged to him. Debts and mortages left just enough to live on uncomfortably; he was not exacting now, and the place was good for an idle, helpless man, who was tired of what he called living, and had taken a late fancy to the open air, and, as soon as the child was old enough, to the companionship of his child. His wife sat indoors all day, crouching over the fire, except when the summer heat was extreme, and then she lay on the grass, under an umbrella. When they sat at table her fingers were always crumbling the bread into tiny crumbs, and often, at tea-time especially, she would take a large slice of bread and mould it into little figures, little nude figures exquisitely proportioned, with all the modelling of the limbs and shoulder-blades. Sometimes she would do more than a single figure, a little well, for instance, and a woman kneeling at the brink, and leaning over it, with her arms outstretched. She loved the little figures, and talked about them very seriously, criticising their defects, not content with the lines that she had got, seeing them with subtler curves than any she had been able to get. She would like to have kept some of them, but, though she soaked them in milk, they would always crumble away as soon as the bread dried. Christian stared at her when her fingers were busy; he was puzzled, not exactly happy; he generally ran away and left her for his father, who was not so queer, half-absorbed, and busy about nothing.

His father had a great fondness for music, but he could not play any instrument, only whistle. He whistled elaborate tunes, with really a kind of skill. There was a good old Broadwood piano in the house, and, from as long ago as he could remember, Christian had been put on the music-stool, and told to play what his father whistled. The first time he was put there he picked out every note correctly, with one finger. The father caught him up in his exuberant way: 'You will be a great musician, my boy!' he said. The mother nodded over the fire, and looked down at her tiny fingers, which could pick out form as the child, it seemed, could pick out sound.

Christian lived at the piano, playing all the music that he could find in the house, and making up a strange, formless music of his own when there was nothing else to play. His ear, from the first, was faultless; if a poker fell in the fireplace he could tell you the pitch of the note which it sounded. He was always listening, and sounds, with him, often became visible, or at least reflected themselves upon his brain in contours and patterns. The wind at night, when it flapped at the windows with the sound of a sail flapping, seemed to surround the house with realisable forms of sound. The music which he played on the piano made lines, whenever he thought of it; never pictures. His mother, who did not seem to herself to know or care anything about music, sometimes described a little scene which the music he had been playing called up to her, but he could never see things in that way. When he played the first ballad of Chopin, for instance, she saw two lovers, sheltering under trees in a wood, out of the rain which was falling around them, and she followed their emotions, as the music interpreted them to her. But he did not understand music like that; what was mathematical in it he saw as pattern, but the emotion came to him in an almost equally abstract way, as musical emotion, beginning and ending in the music itself, and not needing to have any of one's own feelings put into it. It was the music itself that cried and wept, and tore one; the passions of abstract sound.

For, he knew from the beginning, the soul of music is something more than the soul of humanity expressing itself in melody, and the life of music something more than an audible dramatisation of human life. Beethoven, let us say, is angry with the world, Schumann dreams about the roots of a flower; and they sit down to make music under that impulse. Well, the anger will be there, and the flower coming up out of the earth, but the music itself will have forgotten both the dream and the feeling, the moment it begins to speak articulately in sound. It will have its own message, as well as its own language, and you will not be able to write down that message in words, any more than your words can be translated into that language.

And so Christian, with his divination of what music really means, was never able to attach any expressible meaning to the pieces he played, and became tongue-tied if any one asked him questions about them. The emotion of the music, the idea, the feeling there, that was what moved him; and his own personal feelings, apart from some form of music which might translate them into a region where he could recognise them with interest, came to mean less and less to him, until he seemed hardly to have any personal feelings at all. It was natural to him to be kind, people liked him and often imagined that he responded to their liking; but, at many periods of his life, accused him of gross unkindness, or even treachery, and he had not been conscious of the affection or of its betrayal.

And outward things, too, as well as people, meant very little to him, and meant less and less as time went on. What he saw, when he went for long walks with his father, had vanished from his memory before he had returned to the house; it was as if he had been walking through underground passages, with only a little faint light on the roadway in front of his feet. He knew all the sea-cries, but never seemed to notice the movement, the colour, of the sea; the sunsets over the sea left him indifferent; he looked, with the others, but said nothing, and seemed to see nothing.

When he had decided that he was going to be a great pianist, and this was when he was about ten, he had settled down to the hard work which that meant, with an enthusiasm so profound and tenacious that it looked like stolidity. They gave him a room at the top of the house, where he could practise without disturbing anybody, and he shut himself in there, until he was dragged out unwillingly to his meals, grudging the time when he had to sit quiet at the table. 'What are you always thinking about?' they would ask him, as he frowned silently over his food;

but he was thinking about nothing, he wanted to get back to the bar in the middle of which he had been interrupted. The cadence seemed to hang in space, swinging like a spider, and unable to catch the cornice on the other wall.

He was sixteen when he went up to London for the first time, and it had been arranged that he should take lodgings in Bloomsbury, and try to hear some of the great pianists, and, if possible, get some help privately, before he tried for the scholarship. He got a bedroom at the top of a house in Coptic Street, and hired a piano, which took up most of the space left over by the bed; and he began to go to the shilling seats at concerts, especially when there was any piano music to be heard. Just then several of the most famous pianists were in London; he went to hear them, at first with a horrible apprehension, and then more boldly, as he saw what could be learned from them, and yet seemed to fancy that they, too, might have found something to learn from him. He heard their thunders, and laughed: that was not his idea of the instrument, a thing, in their hands, that could overtop an orchestra playing fortissimo. He saw these athletes fight with the poor instrument as if they fought with a dangerous wild beast. Some used it as an anvil to hammer sparks out of it; the chords rang and rebounded as if iron had struck iron; it was the new art of attack, and piano-makers were strengthening their defences daily. Some displayed an incredible agility, and invented all sorts of ugly difficulties, in order to overcome them; they reminded him of the dancing girls he had read of, who used, at Roman feasts, to leap head-foremost into the midst of a circle of sword-blades, and dance there on their hands, and leap out again. He knew that he could not do any of these things, as he heard them done; but was that really the way to treat music, or the way to treat the piano?

Christian Trevalga remembered all this as he sat waiting for the doctor in his rooms in Piccadilly; and it came to him like the first act of a play which he was still watching, without knowing how the curtain was to come down. That year in

London, the loneliness, poverty, labour of it; the great day of the competition, when he played behind the curtain, and Rubinstein, sitting among the professors, silenced every hesitation with his strong approval; the three years of hard daily work, the painful perfecting of everything that he had sketched out for himself; life, as he had lived it, a queer, silent, sullen, not unattractive boy, among the students in whom he took so little interest; all this passed before him in a single flash of memory. He had gone abroad, at the expense of the college; had travelled in Germany and Austria; had extorted the admiration of Brahms, who had said, 'I hate what you play, and I hate how you play it, but you play the piano!' Tschaikowsky was in Vienna; he had taken a warm personal liking to the unresponsive young Englishman, who seemed to be always frowning, and looking at you distrustfully from under his dark, overhanging eyebrows. It was not to the musician that he was unresponsive, as he was to the musician in Brahms, the German doctor of music in spectacles, that peered out of those learned, intellectual scores. He felt Tschaikowsky with his nerves, all that suffering music without silences, never still and happy, like most other music, at all events sometimes. But the man, when he walked arm in arm with him, seemed excessive, a kind of uneasy responsibility.

Then he had come back to London, lived and worked there, given concerts, made his fame in the world, seen himself triumph, watching his own career with an absolute certainty of being able to do what he wanted. And all the time he had been, as he was that day at the college when he won the scholarship, playing behind a curtain. He knew that on the other side of the curtain was the world, with many things to do besides listening to him, though he could arrest it when he liked, and make it listen; then it went on its way again, and the other things continued to occupy it. Well, for him, where were those other things? They hardly existed. The great men who had given him their friendship, all the people who came to him because they admired him, those who came to him because his playing seemed to speak to them from somewhere inside their own hearts, in the little voices of their blood, the women who, as it seemed, loved him: why was it that he could not be as they were, respond to them in their own language, which was that of humanity itself, admire, like, love them back?

He had tried to find himself, to become real, by falling in love. Women had not found it difficult to fall in love with him; his reticence, his enigmatical reluctance to speak out, the sympathetic sullenness of his face, a certain painful sensibility which shot like distressed nerves across his cheeks and forehead and tugged at the restless corners of his eyelids, seemed to attract them as to something which they could perhaps find out, and then soothe, and put to rest. He had no morals, and was too indifferent to refuse much that was offered to him. When it was a simple adventure of the flesh, he accepted it simply, and, without knowing it, won the reputation of being both sensual and hard-hearted, a sort of coldly passionate creature, that promised everything in the sincerity of one moment, and broke every promise in the sincerity of the next. He did not go out of his way to find a woman who did not seem to suggest herself to him; and when he mistook what was, perhaps, real love for something else, all he wanted, he was genuinely sorry, and, at least once, almost fancied that he was going to answer in key at last.

He had met Rana Vaughan at the college, where she was trying, impossibly, to learn the piano. She had the artist's soul, and long, white fingers, which seemed eager to touch the ivory and ebony of the instrument; only, the soul and the fingers never could agree among themselves, there was some stoppage of the electric current between them. The piano never responded to her, but she knew, better than all the professors, how it should respond; and Trevalga's playing was the only playing she had ever liked. She adored him because he could do what she wanted, above all things, to do; and it was with almost a vicarious ecstasy that she listened to him. She admired, pitied, wanted to help him; exulted in him, became his comrade, perhaps (he wondered?) loved him, or would have loved him if he would have let her. He, who could talk to no one else, could talk to her; and she brought him a warmth and reality of life which he had never known. In her, for a time, he seemed to touch real things; and, for a time, the experience quickened him.

She cared intensely for the one thing he cared for, and not less intensely (and here was the wonder to him) for all the other things that existed outside his interests. For her, life was everything, and everything was a part of life. She would have given everything she had to become a great player; but, if you found your way down to the root of things, her feeling for music was neither more nor less than her feeling for every form of art, and her feeling for art, which was unerring, was the same thing as her feeling for skating or dancing. She got as much pleasure from bending a supple binding in her hand as from reading the poems inside it. She made no selections in life, beyond picking out all the beautiful and pleasant things, whatever they might be. Trevalga studied her with amazement; he felt withered, shrivelled up, in body and soul, beside her magnificent acceptance of the world; she vitalised him, drew him away from himself; and he feared her. He feared women.

To live with a woman, thought Christian, in the same house, the same room with her, is as if the keeper were condemned to live by day and sleep by night in the wild beast's cage. It is to be on one's guard at every minute, to apprehend always the claws behind the caressing softness of their padded coverings, to be continually ready to amuse one's dangerous slave, with one's life for the forfeit. The strain of it, the trial to the nerves, the temper! it was not to be thought of calmly. He looked around him, and saw all the other keepers of these ferocious, uncertain creatures, wearing out their lives in the exciting companionship; and a dread of women took the place of his luxurious indifference, as he imagined himself actually playing the part, too.

It would be, he saw, a conflict of egoisms, and he could not afford to risk his own. Woman, as he saw her, is the beast of prey: rapacious of affection, time, money, all the flesh and all the soul, one's nerves, one's attention, pleasure, duty, art itself! She is the rival of the idea, and she never pardons. She requires the sacrifice of the whole man; nothing less will satisfy her; and, to love a woman is, for an artist, to change one's religion.

Christian had tried honestly to explain himself to Rana, but the girl would not understand him. She cared for his art as much as he did; she would never come between him and his art; she would hate him if he preferred her to his art. She said all that, sincerely; but he shook his head obstinately, a little sadly, knowing that for him possible things were impossible. The mere presence of any one he cared for, all the more if he cared for her a great deal, disturbed him, upset his life. And he must keep his life intact while he might.

After all, he considered, what was he? Caged already, for another kind of slavery, the prisoner of his own fingers, as they worked, independently of himself, mechanically, doing their so many miles of promenade a day over the piano. He was such another as the equilibrist whirling around his fixed bar, or swinging from trapeze to trapeze in the air; a specialist in a particular kind of muscular movement, which in him communicated itself to the mechanism of an instrument of sound. For ever on the trapeze of sound, his life, the life of his reputation, risked whenever he went through his performance before the public; yes, he was only a kind of acrobat, doing tricks with his fingers.

As he looked fairly at all his imprisonments, dreading the worst, the no longer solitary imprisonment, he realised that he had no outlook, that he would never be able to look through the bars. 'I have only felt,' he said to himself, 'I have never thought, and I have felt only one thing very acutely, music.' He was almost frightened as he saw, in a flash, within that narrow limits this one interest, this exercise of one instinct, caged him. Other men were curious about many things; the world existed for them, not only as substance, but as a matter for thought; there were all the destinies of nations and of mankind to think about, and he had never thought about them. He wondered what people meant when they spoke about general interests. Were they a kind of safety valve, for the lack of which he was bound, sooner or later, to come to grief?

Occupied more and more nervously with himself, shutting himself up for days and nights, almost without food, in an agony of attack on some difficulty hardly tangible enough to be put into words, he let Rana Vaughan drift away from him, with an unavowed sense of failure, of having lost something which he could not bring himself to take, and which might yet have saved him. She parted from him, at the last, angrily, her pity worn out, her admiration stained with contempt. He remembered the look of her face, flushed, indignant, as, withdrawn now wholly into herself, she said good-bye for the last time. With her went his last hold on the world.

Gradually sound began to take hold of him, like a slave who has overcome his master. The sensation of sound presented itself to him continually, not in the form of memory, nor as the suggestion of a composition, but in a disquieting way, like some invisible companion, always at one's side, whispering into one's ears. He was not always able to distinguish between what he actually heard, a noise in the street, for instance, which came to him for the most part with the suggestion of a cadence, which his ear completed as if it had been the first note of a well-known tune, and what he seemed to hear, through noise or silence, in some region outside reality. 'So long as I can distinguish,' he said to himself, 'between the one and the other, I am safe; the danger will be when they become indistinguishable.'

He had realised a certain danger, always. He felt that he was a piece of mechanism which was not absolutely to be trusted. There had been something wrong from the beginning; the works did not wear evenly; one part or another was bound to use itself up before its time; and then, well, not even a shock would be needed to set everything out of order: it was only a question of time.

He began to watch himself more closely, to watch for the enemy; and now a kind of expectant uneasiness came of itself to suggest otherwise imperceptible pains and troubles of sound. He was always listening, with a frequent precipitation of pulses, to nothing, to something about to come, to the fancy of music. The days dragged, and yet some feverish idea seemed always to be hurrying him along; he was restless whenever his fingers were not on the keys of the piano.

One day, at a concert, while he was playing one of Chopin's studies, something in the curve of the music, which he had always seen as a wavy line, going on indefinitely in space, spreading itself out elastically, but without ever forming a pattern, seemed to become almost externally visible, just above the level of the strings on the open top of the piano. It was like grey smoke, forming and unforming as if it boiled up softly out of the pit where the wires were coiled up. It was so distinct that he shut his eyes for a moment, to see if it would be there when he opened them again. It was still there, getting darker in colour, and more distinct. He looked out of the corner of his eyes, to see if the people sitting near him had noticed anything; but the people sitting near him had their eyes fixed on his fingers, from which he seemed, as usual, to be quite detached; they evidently saw nothing. He smiled to himself, half apologetically; the piece had come to an end, and he was bowing to the applause; he walked boldly off the platform.

When he came back to play again, he looked nervously at the top of the piano, but there was nothing to be seen. He sat down, and bent over the keyboard, and his hands began to run to and fro softly. When he looked up he saw what he was playing as clearly as he could have seen the notes if they had been there: but the wavy line was upright now, and drifted upwards swiftly, vanishing at a certain point; it swayed to and fro like a snake beating time to the music of the snake-charmer; and he looked at it as if it understood him, and nodded his head to it, to show that he understood. By this time it seemed to him quite natural, and he forgot that there had ever been a time when he had not seen the music like that.

On his way home after the concert, it occurred to him that something unusual had happened, but he could not remember what it was. He dined by himself, and after dinner went out into the streets, and walked in the midst of people, as he liked to do, that he might take hold of something real. But he could not concentrate his mind, he seemed somehow to be slipping away from himself, dissolving into an uneasy vacancy. The people did not seem very real that night: he stopped for a long time at the corner of the pavement, near Piccadilly Circus, and tried to see what was going on around him. It was quite useless. The confusing lights, the crush and hurry of figures wrapped in dark clothes, the noise of the horses' hoofs striking the stones, the shouts of omnibus-conductors and newsboys, all the surge and struggle of horrible exterior forces, seeming to be tightened up into an inextricable disorder, but pushing out with a hundred arms this way and that, making some sort of headway against the opposition of things, brought over him a complete bewilderment. 'I can see no reason,' he said to himself, 'why I am here rather than there, why these atoms which know one another so little, or have lost some recognition of themselves, should coalesce in this particular body, standing still where all is in movement.' He looked at the horses pulled back roughly at a cross-current, and tossing back their heads as the hind-legs grew convulsively rigid, and he felt sorry for them, and wondered why the driver was driving them and why they were not driving the driver. Some one ran violently against him, and apologised. The shock did nothing to wake him up; he noticed it, waited for the effect, and was surprised that no effect came. 'Decidedly,' he said to himself, 'I am losing my sense of material things, for, slight as it always has been, I have always resented being pushed into the mud.'

He went home, and opened the piano; but he was afraid of it, and shut it up, and went to bed. He slept well, but he dreamed that he was on the island of Portland, among the convicts; there was a woman with him, who seemed to be Rana, and they had tea at a farm, high up among trees; and then he went away and forgot her, and found himself in a lonely place where there were a number of cucumber-frames on the ground, and several convicts were laid out asleep in each, half-naked, and packed together head to heel. Then he remembered the woman, and went back to the farm where he had left her; but she was no longer there, she had gone to look for him, and he thought she must have lost her way among the convicts. He was greatly distressed, but he found he was walking with her along Piccadilly, and she told him that she had been waiting for him a long time in an omnibus which had stopped at the corner of the Circus.

When he awoke in the morning he was relieved to find that his brain seemed to have become quite clear, surprisingly clear, as if the fog that had been gathering about him had lifted; and he sat at the piano playing for many hours, and when he had finished playing he heard still more ravishing sounds in the air, a music which was like what Chopin might have written in Paradise. Tears of delight came into his eyes; he sat listening in an ecstacy. Now everything had come right; all the trouble and confusion had gone out of the sounds; they no longer teased him with their muttering, coming and going elusively; they were all about him, they flooded the air, they were like pure joy, speaking at last its own language.

And for days after that he went about with a strange, secret smile on his face, more than reconciled to his new companion, enamoured of him; and at last he could keep the secret no longer, but had to tell every one he met of this miracle that now went with him wherever he went. When he stopped listening, and played the music that he had known before this new music spoke to him, he seemed to play better than he had ever played before. Only, when he had stopped playing, he sank back sleepily into his ecstatic oblivion, not distinguish-ing between those he talked with in his dream (the Chopin out of Paradise) and the few remaining friends, who now came about him pityingly, and tried to do what they could for him. Their coming awakened him a little; he awoke enough to realise that they thought him mad; and it was with a very lucid fear that he waited now for the doctor who was to decide finally whether he might still keep his place in the world.

Five years later, when Christian Trevalga died in the asylum at ——, some loose scraps of paper were found, on which he had jotted down a few disconnected thoughts about music. They are, perhaps, worth giving, for they are more explicit than he ever cared, or was able, to be when he was quite sane; and, fragmentary as they are, may help to complete one's picture of the man.

'It has been revealed to me that there is but one art, but many languages through which men speak it. When the angels talk among themselves, their speech is art; for they do not talk as men do, to discuss matters or to relate facts, but to express either love or wisdom. It is partly the beauty of their voices which causes whatever they say to assume a form of beauty. Music comes nearer than any other of the human languages to the sound of these angelic voices. But painting is also a language, and sculpture, and poetry; only these have more of the atmosphere of the earth about them, and are not so clear. I have heard pictures which spoke to me melodiously, and I have listened to the faultless rhythm of statues; but it was as an Englishman who knows French and Italian quite well follows a conversation in those languages. He has to substitute one sound for another in his mind.

'When I am playing the piano I am always afraid of hurting a sound. I believe that sounds are living beings, flying about us like motes in the air, and that they suffer if we clutch them roughly. Have you ever tried to catch a butterfly without brushing the dust off its wings? Every time I press a note I feel as if I were doing that, and it is an agony to me.

I am certain that I have hurt fewer sounds than any other pianist.

'Chopin's music screams under its breath, like a patient they are operating upon in the hospital. There are flowers on the pillow, great sickly pungent flowers, and he draws in their perfume with the same breath that is jarred down below by the scraping sound of the little saw.

'Chopin always treats the piano like a gentleman. He never gives it a note that it cannot sing, he is always scrupulous towards its whims, he indulges it like a spoilt child. Schumann comes back cloudily out of a dream, and sets down the notes as he heard them, upon paper; then he leaves the piano to make the best of it.

'Most modern music is a beggar for pity. The musician tries to show us how he has suffered, and how hopeless he is. He sets his toothache and his heart-ache to music, putting those sufferings into the music, without remembering that sounds have their own agonies, which alone they can express in a perfect manner. He forgets also that joy is the natural speech of music, and that when he comes to sound for the expression of his joy he is asking it to sing out of its own heart.

'I remember I once heard a Siamese band playing on board the yacht of the King of Siam. It played its own music, of which I could make nothing; and also passages from our operas. How can the same ears hear in two different ways? And how far behind these Eastern musicians are we, who cannot even understand their music when it is played to us! Some day some one will dig down to the roots, and turn up music as it is before it is tamed to the scale.

'It is strange, I never used to think about music: I accepted it by an act of faith; I was too near it to look all round it. But lately, I do not know why, I have been forced to think out many of the things which I used to know without thinking. It all comes to the same thing in the end; one form or another of knowledge; and does it matter if I can explain it to you or not?'

THE CHILDHOOD OF LUCY NEWCOME

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The house which Lucy Newcome remembered as her home, the only home she ever had, was a small house, hardly more than a cottage, with a little, neat garden in front of it, and a large, untidy garden at the back. There was a low wooden palisade cutting it off from the road, which, in that remote suburb of the great town, had almost the appearance of a road in the country. The house had two windows, one on each side of the door, and above that three more windows, and attics above that. The windows on each side of the door were the windows of the two sitting-rooms; the kitchen, with its stone floor, its shining rows of brass things around the walls, its great dresser, was at the back. It was through the kitchen that you found your way into the big garden, where the grass was always long and weedy and ill-kept, and so all the pleasanter for lying on; and where there were a few alder-trees, a pear-tree on which the pears never seemed to thrive, for it was quite close to Lucy's bedroom window, a flower-bed along the wall, and a great, old sundial, which Lucy used to ponder over when the shadows came and stretched out their long fingers across it. The garden, when she thinks of it now, comes to her often as she saw it one warm Sunday evening, walking to and fro there beside her mother, who was saying how good it was to be well again, or better: this was not long before she died; and Lucy had said to herself, What a dear little mother I have, and how young, and small, and pretty she looks in that lilac bodice with the bright belt round the waist! Lucy had been as tall as her mother when she was ten, and at twelve she could look down on her quite protectingly.

Her father she but rarely saw; but it was her father whom she worshipped, whom she was taught to worship. The whole house, she, her mother, and Linda, the servant, who was more friend than servant (for she took no wages, and when she wanted anything, asked for it), all existed for the sake of that wonderful, impracticable father of hers; it was for him they starved, it was to him they looked for the great future which they believed in so implicitly, but scarcely knew in what shape to look for. She knew that he had come of gentlefolk, in another county, that he had been meant for the Church, and, after some vague misfortune at Cambridge, had married her mother, who was but seventeen, and of a class beneath him, against the will of his relations, who had cast him off just as, at twenty-one, he had come into a meagre allowance from the will of his grandfather. He had been the last of eleven children, born when his mother was fifty years of age, and he had inherited the listless temperament of a dwindling stock. He had never been able to do anything seriously, or even to make up his mind quite what great thing he was going to do. First he had found a small clerkship, then he had dropped casually upon the post which he was to hold almost to the time of his death, as secretary to some Assurance Society, whose money it was his business to collect. He did the work mechanically; at first, competently enough; but his heart was in other things. Lucy was never sure whether it was the great picture he was engaged upon, or the great book, that was to make all the difference in their fortunes. She never doubted his power to do anything he liked; and it was one of her privileges sometimes to be allowed to sit in his room (the sitting-room on the left of the door, where it was always warmer and more comfortable than anywhere else in the house), watching him at his paints or his manuscripts, with great serious eyes that sometimes seemed to disquiet him a little; and then she would be told to run away and not worry mother.

The little mother, too, she saw less of than children mostly see of their mothers; for her mother was never quite well, and she would so often be told: 'You must be quiet now, and not go into your mother's room, for she has one of her headaches,' that she gradually accustomed herself to do without anybody's company, and then she would sit all alone, or with her doll, who was called Arabella, to whom she would chatter for hours together, in a low and familiar voice, making all manner of confidences to her, and telling her all manner of stories. Sometimes she would talk to Linda instead, sitting on the corner of the kitchen fender; but Linda was not so good a listener, and she had a way of going into the scullery, and turning on a noisy stream of water, just at what ought to have been the most absorbing moment of the narrative.

Lucy was a curious child, one of those children of whom nurses are accustomed to say that they will not make old bones. She was always a little pale, and she would walk in her sleep; and would spend whole hours almost without moving, looking vaguely and fixedly into the air: children ought not to dream like that! She did not know, herself, very often, what she was dreaming about; it seemed to her natural to sit for hours doing nothing.

Often, however, she knew quite well what she was dreaming about; and first of all she was dreaming about herself. Really, she would explain if you asked her, she did not belong to her parents at all; she belonged to the fairies; she was a princess; there was another, a great mother, who would come some day and claim her. And this consciousness of being really a princess was one of the joys of her imagination. She had composed all the circumstances of her state, many times over, indeed, and always in a different way. It was the heightening she gave to what her mother had taught her: that she was of a better stock than the other children who lived in the other small houses all round, and must not play with them, or accept them as equals. That was to be her consolation if she had to do without many of the things she wanted, and to be shabbily dressed (out of old things of her mother's, turned and cut and pieced together), while perhaps some of those other children, who were not her equals, had new dresses.

And then she would make up stories about the people she knew, the ladies to whom she paid a very shifting devotion, very sincere while it lasted. One of her odd fancies was to go into the graveyard which surrounded the church, and to play about in the grass there, or, more often, gather flowers and leaves, and carry them to a low tomb, and sit there, weaving them into garlands. These garlands she used to offer to the ladies whose faces she liked, as they passed in and out of the church. The strange little girl who sat among the graves, weaving garlands, and who would run up to them so shyly, and with so serious a smile, offering them her flowers, seemed to these ladies rather a disquieting little person, as if she, like her flowers, had a churchyard air about her.

Blonde, tall, slim, delicately-complexioned, with blue eyes and a wavering, somewhat sensuous mouth, the child took after her father; and he used to say of her sometimes, half whimsically, that she was bound to be like him altogether, bound to go to the bad. The big, brilliant man, who had made so winning a failure of life, so popular always, and the centre of a little ring of intellectual people, used sometimes to let her stay in the room of an evening, while he and his friends drank their ale and smoked pipes and talked their atheistical philosophy. These friends of her father used to pet her, because she was pretty; and it was one of them who paid her the first compliment she ever had, comparing her face to a face in a picture. She had never heard of the picture, but she was immensely flattered; for she did not think a painter would ever paint any one who was not very pretty. She listened to their conversation, much of which she could not understand, as if she understood every word of it; and she wondered very much at some of the things they said. Her mother was a Catholic, and, though religion was rarely referred to, had taught her some little prayers; and it puzzled her that all this could be true, and yet that clever people should have doubts of it. She had always learned that cleverness (book-learning, or any disinterested journeying of the intellect) was the one important thing in the world. Her father was clever: that was why everything must bow to him. There must be something in it, then, if these clever people, if her father himself, doubted of God, of heaven and hell, of the good ordering of this world. And she announced one day to the pious servant, who had told her that God sees everything, that when she was older she meant to get the better of God, by building a room all walls and no windows, within which she would be good or bad as she pleased, without his seeing her.

Lucy was never sent to school, like most children; that was partly because they were very poor, but more because her father had always intended to teach her himself, on a new and liberal scheme of education, which seemed to him better than the education you get in schools. And sometimes, for as much as a few weeks together, he would set her lessons day by day, and be excessively severe with her, not permitting her to make a single slip in anything he had given her to learn.

He would even punish her sometimes, if she still failed to learn some lesson perfectly; and that seemed to her a mortal indignity; so that one day she rushed out into the garden, and climbed up into a tree, and then called out, tremulously but triumphantly: 'If you promise not to punish me, I'll come down; but if you don't, I'll throw myself down!'

She always disliked learning lessons, and those fits of scrupulousness on his part were her great dread. They did not occur often; and between whiles he was very lenient, ready to get out of the trouble of teaching her on the slightest excuse; only too glad if she did not bother him by coming to say her lessons. Both were quite happy then; she to be allowed to sit in his room with her lesson-book on her knees, dreaming; he not to be hindered in the new sketch he was making or the notes he was preparing for that great book of the future, perhaps out of one of those old, calf-covered books which he used to bring back from second-hand shops in the town, and which Lucy used to admire for their ancient raggedness, as they stood in shelves round the room, brown and broken-backed.

And then if she had not her geography to learn by heart (those lists of capes and rivers and the population of countries, which she could indeed learn by heart, but which represented nothing to her of the actual world itself) she had of course all the more time for her own reading. When she had outgrown that old fancy about the fairies, and about being a princess, she cared nothing for stories of adventure; but little for the material wonders of the 'Arabian Nights'; somewhat more for the 'Pilgrim's Progress,' in which she always lingered over that passage of the good people through the bright follies of Vanity Fair; but most of all for certain quiet stories of lovers, in which there was no improbable incident, and no too fantastical extravagance of passion; but a quiet probable fidelity, plenty of troubles, and of course a wedding at the end. One book, 'The Story of Mrs. Jardine,' she was never tired of reading; and she liked almost all the stories in the bound volumes of the 'Argosy.' Then there was a little book of poetical selections; she never could remember the name of it afterwards; and there were the songs of Thomas Moore, and, above all, there was Mrs. Hemans. Those gentle and lady-like poems 'of the affections,' with their nice sentiments, the faded ribbons of their second-hand romance, seemed to the child like a beautiful glimpse into the real, tender, not too passionate world, where men and women loved magnanimously, and had heroic sufferings, and died, perhaps, but for a great love, or a great cause, and always nobly. She thought that the ways of the world blossomed naturally into Casabiancas and Gertrudes and Imeldas, who were faithful to death, and came into their inheritance of love or glory beyond the grave. She used to wonder if she, too, like Costanza, had a 'pale Madonna brow'; and she wished nothing more fervently than to be like those saintly and affectionate creatures, always so beautiful, and so often (what did it matter?) unfortunate, who took poison from the lips of their lovers, and served God in prison, and came back afterwards, spirits, out of the angelical rapture of heaven, to be as some rare music, or subtle perfume, in the souls of those who had loved them. Many of these poems were about death, and it seemed natural to her, at that time, to think much about death, which she conceived as a quite peaceful thing, coming to you invisibly out of the sky, and which she never associated with the pale faces and more difficult breathing of those about her. She had never known her mother to be quite well; and when, on her twelfth birthday, her mother called her into her room, where she lay in bed now so often, and talked to her more solemnly than she had ever talked before, saying that if she became very ill, too ill to get up at all, Lucy was to look after her father as carefully as she herself had looked after him, always to look after him, and never let him want for anything; even then it did not seem to the child that this meant more than a little more illness; and it was so natural for people to be ill.

And so, after all, the end came almost suddenly; and the first great event of her childhood took her by surprise. The gentle, suffering woman had been failing for many months, and when, one afternoon in early March, the doctor told her to take to her bed at once, life seemed to ebb out of her daily, with an almost visible haste to be gone. Whenever she was allowed to come in, Lucy would curl herself up on the foot of the bed, never taking her eyes off the face of the dying woman, who was for the most part unconscious, muttering unintelligible words sometimes, in a hoarse voice, broken by coughs, and breathing, all the time, in great, heavy breaths, which made a rattle in her throat. When she was in the next room, Lucy could hear this monotonous sound going on, almost as plainly as in the room itself. It was that sound that frightened her, more than anything; for, when she was sitting on the bed, watching the face lying among the pillows (drawn, and glazed with a curious flush, as it was), it seemed, after all, only as if her mother was very, very ill, and as if she might get better, for the lips were still red, and sucked in readily all the spoonsful of calvesfoot jelly, and brandy and water, which were really just keeping her alive from hour to hour. On Friday night, in the middle of the night, as Lucy was sleeping quietly, she felt, in her dream, as it seemed to her, two lips touch her cheek, and, starting awake, saw her father standing by the bedside. He told her to get up, put on some of her things, and come quietly into the next room. She crept in, huddled up in a shawl, very pale and trembling, and it seemed to her that her mother must be a little better, for she drew her breath more slowly and not quite so loudly. One arm was lying outside the clothes, and every now and then this arm would raise itself up, and the hand would reach out, blindly, until the nurse, or her father, took it and laid it back gently in its place. They told her to kiss her mother, and she kissed her, crying very much, but her mother did not kiss her, or open her eyes; and as she touched her hair, which was coming out from under her cap, she felt that it was all damp, but the lips were quite dry and warm. Then they told her to go back to bed, but she clung to the foot of the bed, and refused to go, and the nurse said, 'I think she may stay.' The tears were running down both her cheeks, but she did not move, or take her eyes off the face on the pillow. It was very white now, and once or twice the mouth opened with a slight gasp; once the face twitched, and half turned on the pillow; she had to wait before the next breath came; then it paused again; then, with an effort, there was another breath; then a long pause, a very slow breath, and no more. She was led round to kiss her mother again on the forehead, which was quite warm; but she knew that her mother was dead, and she sobbed wildly, inconsolably, as they led her back to her own room, where, after they had left her, and she could hear them moving quietly about the house, she lay in bed trying to think, trying not to think, wondering what it was that had really happened, and if things would all be different now.

And with her mother's death it seemed as if her own dream-life had come suddenly to an end, and a new, more desolate, more practical life had begun, out of which she could not look any great distance. After the black darkness of those first few days; the coming of the undertakers, the hammering down of the coffin, the slow drive to the graveside, the wreath of white flowers which she shed, white flower by white flower, upon the shining case of wood lying at the bottom of a great pit, in which her mother was to be covered up to stay there for ever; after those first days of merely dull misery, broken by a few wild outbursts of tears, she accepted this new life into which she had come, as she accepted the black clothes which Linda the servant, now more a friend than ever, had had made for her. Her father could no longer bear to sleep in the room in which his wife had died, so Lucy gave up her own room to him, and moved into the room that had been her mother's; and it seemed to bring her closer to her mother to sleep there. She thought of her mother very often, and very sadly, but the remembrance of those almost last words to her, those solemn words on her twelfth birthday, that she was to look after her father as her mother had looked after him, and never let him want for anything, helped her to meet every day bravely, because every day brought some definite thing for her to do. She felt years and years older, and quietly ready for whatever was now likely to happen.

For a little while she saw more of her father, for they had their mid-day meal together now, and she used to come and sit at the table when he was having his nine o'clock meat supper, with which he had always indulged himself, even when there was very little in the house for the others. He still took it, and his claret with it, which the doctor had ordered him to take; but he took it with scantier and scantier appetite; talking less over his wine, and falling into a strange and brooding listlessness. During his wife's illness he had let his affairs drift; and the society of which he was the secretary had overlooked it, as far as they could, on account of his trouble. But now he attended to his duties less than ever; and he was reminded, a little sharply, that things could not go on like this much longer. He took no heed of the warning, though the duns were beginning to gather about him. When there was a ring at the door, Lucy used to squeeze up against the window to see who it was; and if it was one of those troublesome people whom she soon got to know by sight, she would go to the door herself, and tell them that they could not see her father, and explain to them, in her grave, childish way, that it was no use coming to her father for money, because he had no money just then but he would have some at quarter-day, and they might call again then. Sometimes the men tried to push past her into the hall, but she would never let them; her father was not in, or he was very unwell, and no one could see him; and she spoke so calmly and so decidedly that they always finished by going away. If they swore at her, or said horrid things about her father, she did not mind much. It did not surprise her that such dreadful people used dreadful language.

In telling the duns that her father was very unwell, she was not always inventing. For a long time there had been something vaguely the matter with him, and ever since her mother's death he had sickened visibly, and nothing would rouse him from his pale and cheerless decrepitude. He would lie in bed till four, and then come downstairs and sit by the fireplace, smoking his pipe in silence, doing nothing, neither reading, nor writing, nor sketching. All his interest in life seemed to have gone out together; his very hopes had been taken from him, and without those fantastic hopes he was but the shadow of himself. It scarcely roused him when the directors of his society wrote to him that they would require his services no longer. When they sent a man to unscrew the brass plate on the door, on which there were the name of the society and the amount of its capital, he went outside and stood in the garden while it was being done. Then he gave the man a shilling for his trouble.

Soon after that, he refused to eat or get up, and a great terror came over Lucy lest he, too, should die; and now there was no money in the house, and the duns still knocked at the door. She begged him to let her write to his relations, but he refused flatly, saying that they would not receive her mother, and he would never see them, or take a penny of their money as long as he lived. One day a cab drove up to the door, and a hard-featured woman got out of it. Lucy, looking out of the bedroom window, recognised her aunt, Miss Marsden, her mother's eldest sister, whom she had only seen at the funeral, and to whose grim face and rigid figure she had already taken a dislike. It appeared that Linda, unknown to them, had written to tell her into what desperate straits they had fallen; and her severe sense of duty had brought her to their help.

And the aunt was certainly good to them in her stern, unkindly way. The first thing she did was to send for a doctor, who shook his head very gravely when he had examined the patient; and spoke of foreign travel, and other impossible, expensive remedies. That was the first time that Lucy ever began to long for money, or to realise exactly what money meant. It might mean life or death, she saw now.

Her father now lay mostly in bed, very weak and quiet, and mostly in silence; and whether his eyes were closed or open, he seemed to be thinking, always thinking. He liked Lucy to come and sit by him; but if she chattered much he would stop her, after a while, and say that he was tired, and she must be quiet. And then sometimes he would talk to her, in his vague, disconnected way, about her mother, and of how they had met, and had found hard times together a great happiness; and he would look at her with an almost impersonal scrutiny, and say: 'I think you will live happily, not with the happiness that we had, for you will never love as we loved, but you will find it easy to like people, and many people will find it easy to like you; and if you have troubles they will weigh on you lightly, for you will live always in the day, that is, without too much memory of the day that was, or too much thought of the day that will be to-morrow.' And once he said: 'I hardly know why it is I feel so little anxiety about your future. I seem somehow to know that you will always find people to look after you. I don't know why they should, I don't know why they should.' And then he added, after a pause, looking at her a little sadly, 'You will never love nor be loved passionately, but you have a face that will seem to many, the first time they see you, like the face of an old and dear friend.'

Sometimes, when he felt a little better, the sick man would come downstairs, and at times he would walk about in the garden, stooping under his great-coat and leaning upon his stick. One very bright day in early February he seemed better than he had been since his illness had come upon him, and as he stood at the window looking at the white road shining under the pale sun, he said suddenly: 'I feel quite well to-day, I shall go for a little walk.' His eyes were bright, there was a slight flush on his cheek, and he seemed to move a little more easily than usual. 'Lucy,' he said, 'I think I should like some claret with my supper to-night, like old times. You must go into the town and get me some: I suppose there is none in the house.' Lucy took the money gladly, for she thought: 'He is beginning to be better.' 'Get it from Allen's,' he called after her, as she went to put on her hat and jacket; 'it won't take so very much longer to go there and back, and it will be better there.' When she came downstairs her aunt was helping him to put on his coat. 'Don't wait for me,' he said, smiling, and tapping her cheek with his thin, chilly fingers; 'I shall have to walk slowly.' She went out, and turning, as she came to the bend in the road, saw him come out of the gate, leaning on his stick, and begin to walk slowly along in the middle of the road. He did not look up, and she hurried on.

It was the last time she ever saw him. The house, when she returned to it, after her journey into town, had an air of ominous quiet, and she saw with surprise that her father's hat and coat were lying in a heap across the chair in the hall, instead of hanging neatly upon the hat-pegs. As she closed the door behind her, she heard the bedroom door opened, and her aunt came quickly downstairs with a strange look on her face. She began to tremble, she knew not why, and mechanically she put the bottle of wine on the floor by the side of the chair; and her aunt, though she would always have everything put in its proper place, did not seem to notice it; but took her into the sitting-room, and said: 'There has been an accident; no, you must not go upstairs'; and she said to herself, seeming to hear her own words at the back of her brain, where there was a dull ache that was like the coming-to of one who has been stunned: 'He is dead, he is dead.' She felt that her aunt was shaking her, and wondered why she shook her, and why everything looked so dim, and her aunt's face seemed to be fading away from her, and she caught at her; and then she heard her aunt say (she could hear her now), 'I thought you were going to faint: I'll have no fainting, if you please; I must go up to him again.' So he was not dead, after all; and she listened, with a relief which was almost joy, while her aunt told her rapidly what had happened: how the mail-cart had turned a corner at full speed just as he was walking along the road, more tired than he had thought, and he had not the strength to pull himself out of the way in time, and had been knocked down, and the wheel had just missed him, but he had been terribly shaken, and one of the horse's hoofs had struck him on the face. They hoped it was nothing serious; he seemed to feel little pain; but he had said: 'Don't let Lucy come in; she musn't see me like this.'

Lucy had been so used to obey her father, his commands had always been so capricious, that she obeyed now without a murmur. She understood him; the fastidiousness which was part of his affection, and which made him refuse to be seen, by those he loved, under a disfigurement which time would probably heal, was one of the things for which she loved him, for it was part of her pride in him.

The doctor had come and gone; he had been very serious, she had seen his grave face, and had overheard one or two of his words to her aunt; she had heard him say: 'Of course, it is a question of time.' Night came on, and she sat in the unlighted room alone, and looking into the fire, in which the last dreams of her childhood seemed to flicker in little wavering tongues of flame, which throbbed, and went out, one after another, in smoke or ashes. She cried a little, quietly, and did not wipe away the tears; but sat on, looking into the fire, and thinking. She was crying when her aunt came downstairs, and told her that she must go to bed; he was resting quietly, and they hoped he would be better in the morning.

She slept heavily, without dreams; and the hour seemed to her late when she awoke in the morning. It was Linda, not her aunt, who came into the room, and took her in her arms, and cried over her, and did not need to tell her that she had no father. He had died suddenly in his sleep, and just before he turned over on his side for the last rest, he had said to her (she thought drowsily): 'I am very tired; if anything happens, cover my face.' When Lucy crept into the room, on tip-toe, his face was covered. It was a white, shrouded thing that lay there, not her father. The terror of the dead seized hold upon her, and she shrieked, and Linda caught her up in her arms, and carried her back to her room, and soothed her, as if she had been a little, wailing child.

At the funeral she saw, for the first time, her father's relations, the rich relations who had cast him off; and she hated them for being there, for speaking to her kindly, for offering to look after her. She was rude to them, and she wished to be rude. 'My father would never touch your money,' she said, 'and I am sure he wouldn't like me to, and I don't want it. I don't want to have anything to do with you.' She clung to the severe aunt who had been good to her father; and she tried to smile on her other uncle and aunt, and on her cousin, who was not many years older than she was: he had seemed to her so kind, and so ready to be her friend. 'I will go with my aunt,' she said. The rich relatives acquiesced, not unwillingly. They did not linger in the desolate house, where this unreasonable child, as they thought her, stood away from them on the other side of the room.

She seemed to herself to be doing the right thing, and what her father would have wished; and she saw them go out with relief, not giving a thought to the future, only knowing that she had buried her childhood, on that day of the funeral, in the grave with her father.

THE DEATH OF PETER WAYDELIN.

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Peter Waydelin, the painter of those mysterious, brutal pictures, who died last year at the age of twenty-four, spent a week with me at Bognor, trying to get better, a little while before it was quite certainly too late; and we had long talks of a very intimate kind as we lay and lounged about the sand from Selsey to Blake's Felpham, along that exquisite coast. To him, if he were to be believed, all that meant very little; he hated nature, he was always assuring you; but at Bognor nature deals with its material so much in the manner of art that he can hardly have been sincere in not feeling the colour-sense of those arrangements of sand, water, and sky which were perpetually changing before him. One of our conversations that I remembered best, because he seemed to put more of himself into it than usual, took place one afternoon in June as we lay on the sand about half-way towards Selsey, beyond the last of those troublesome groins, and I remember that as I listened to him, and heard him defining so sincerely his own ideas of art, I was conscious all the time of a magnificent silent refutation of some of those ideas, as nature, quietly expressing herself before us, transformed the whole earth gradually into a new and luminous world of air. He did not seem to see the sunset; now and then he would pick up a pebble and throw it vehemently, almost angrily, into the water. We were talking of art. He began to explain to me what art meant to him, and what it was he wanted to do with his own art. I remember almost the very words he used, sometimes so serious, sometimes so petulant and boyish. I was interested in his ideas, and the man too interested me; so young and so experienced, so mature already and so enthusiastic under his cynicism. He puzzled me: it was as if there were a clue wanting; I could not get further with him than a certain point, frank, self-explanatory even, as he seemed to be. Of himself he never spoke, only of his ideas. I knew vaguely that he had been in Paris, and I supposed that he had been living there for some time. I had met him in London, in the street, quite casually, and he had looked so ill that I had asked him there and then to come with me to Bognor, where I was going. He agreed willingly, and was at the station with his bag the next day. I never ask people about their private affairs, and his talk was entirely about pictures, his own chiefly, and about ideas. As he talked I tried to piece together the man and his words. What was it in this man, who was so much a gentleman, that drew him instinctively, whenever he took up a brush or a pencil, towards gross things, things that he painted as if he hated them, but painted always? Was it a theory or an enslavement? and had he, in order to interpret with so cruel a fidelity so much that was factitious and dishonourable in life, sunk to the level of what he painted? I could not tell. He was not obviously the man of his pictures, nor was he obviously the reverse. I felt in those pictures, and I felt equally, but differently, in the man, a fundamental sincerity; after that came I know not how much of pose, perhaps merely the defiant pose of youth. He was a problem to me, which I wanted to think out; and I listened very attentively to everything that he said on that afternoon when he was so much more communicative than usual.

'All art, of course,' he said, 'is a way of seeing, and I have my way. I did not get to it at once. Like everybody else, I began by seeing too much. Gradually I gave up seeing things in shades, in subdivisions; I saw them in masses, each single. It takes more choice than you think, and more technical skill, to set one plain colour against another, unshaded, like a great, raw morsel, or a solid lump of the earth. The art of the painter, you observe, consists in seeing in a new, summarising way, getting rid of everything but the essentials; in seeing by patterns. You know how a child draws a house? Well, that is how the average man thinks he sees it, even at a distance.

You have to train your eye not to see. Whistler sees nothing but the fine shades, which unite into a picture in an almost bodiless way, as Verlaine writes songs almost literally "without words." You can see, if you like, in just the opposite way: leaving in only the hard outlines, leaving out everything that lies between. To me that is the best way of summarising, the most abbreviated way. You get rid of all that molle, sticky way of work which squashes pictures into cakes and puddings, and of that stringy way of work which draws them out into tapes and ribbons. It is a way of seeing square, and painting like hits from the shoulder.

'I wonder,' he went on, after a moment, 'how many people think that I paint ugly pictures, as they call them, because I am unable to paint pretty ones? Perhaps even you have never seen any of my quite early work: Madonnas for Christmas cards and hallelujah angels for stained-glass windows. They were the prettiest things imaginable, immensely popular, and they brought me in several pounds. I take them out and show them to people who complain that I have no sense of beauty, and they always ask me pityingly why I have not gone on turning out these confectionaries.

'I contend that I have never done anything which is without beauty, because I have never done anything which is without life, and life is the source and sap of beauty. I tell you that there is not one of those grimacing masks, those horribly pale or horribly red faces, plastered white or red, leering professionally across a gulf of footlights, or a café-table, that does not live, live to the roots of the eyes, somewhere in the soul, I think! And if beauty is not the visible spirit of all that infamous flesh, when I have sabred it like that along my canvas, with all my hatred and all my admiration of its foolish energy, I at least am unable to conjecture where beauty has gone to live in the world.'

He looked at me almost indignantly, as if he took me for one of his critics. I said nothing, and he went on:

'I have done nothing, believe me, without being sure that I was doing a beautiful thing. People don't see it, it seems.

How should they, when we do our best to train them up within the prison walls of a Raphael æsthetics, when we send them to the Apollo Belvedere, instead of to the marbles of Ægina? Our academies shut out nine parts of beauty and imprison us with the poor tenth, which we have never even the space to frequent casually and grow familiar with. How much of the world itself do you think exists as a thing of beauty for the average man? Why, he has to know if the most exquisite leaf in the world, the thing I came upon just now in the lane, belongs to a flower or a weed before he can tell whether he ought to commend it for existing. I hate nature, because fools prostrate themselves before sunsets; as if there is not much better drawing in that leaf than in all the Turners of the sky. You see, one has to quote Turner to apologise for a sunset!'

He laughed, really without malice, waving his hand towards the sky with a youthful impertinence. For a little while he was silent, and then, in a different tone, he said:

'I wonder if it is possible to paint what one doesn't like, to take one's models as models, and only know them for the hours during which they sit to you in this attitude or that. I don't believe that it is. Much of our bad painting comes from respectable people thinking that they can soil their hands with paint and not let the dye sink into their innermost selves. Do you know that you are the only man of my own world that I ever see, or have seen for years now? People call me eccentric; I am only logical. You can't paint the things I paint, and live in a Hampstead villa. You must come and see me some day: will you take the address? 3 Somervell Street, Islington. It's not much like a studio. However, there's "Collins's" at hand, and I live there a good deal, you know. I lived in the Hampstead Road for some time on account of the "Bedford." But "Collins's" suits me and my models better.'

He broke off with an ambiguous laugh, flung his last stone into the water, and jumped up, as if to end the conversation. Something in the way he spoke made me feel vaguely uneasy, but I was used to his exaggerations, his way of inventing as he went along. Was I, after all, any nearer to his secret, to himself as he really was?

Waydelin went back to London and I to Russia, which I shall always remember, after that terrible summer under the gold and green domes of Moscow, as the hottest country in which I have ever been. When I came back to London I thought of Waydelin, made plan after plan to visit him, when one evening in November I received a brief note in his handwriting, asking me if I would come and see him at once, as he was very ill, and wanted to see me on a matter of business. I started immediately after dinner and got to Islington a little after nine. The street was one of those drab, hopeless streets to which a Russian observer has lately attributed the 'spleen' from which all Englishmen are thought to suffer. There was a row of houses on each side of the way, every house exactly like every other house, each with its three steps leading to the door, its bow window on one side, its strip of dingy earth in which there were a few dusty stalks between the lowest step and the railing, the paint for the most part peeling off the door, the bell-handle generally hanging out from its hole in the wall. I rang at No. 3. I had to wait for some time, and then the door was opened by an impudent-looking servant girl in a very untidy dress. I asked for Waydelin. 'Mrs. Waydelin, did you say?' said the girl, leering at me; then, calling over my head to the driver of a four-wheeler which just then drew up at the door, 'Wait five minutes, will you?' she turned to me again: 'Mr. Waydelin? I don't know if you can see him.' I told her impatiently that I had come by appointment, and she held the door open for me to come in. She knocked at a room on the first floor. 'Come in,' said a shrill voice that I did not know, and I went in.

It was a bedroom; a woman, with her bodice off, was making-up in front of the glass, and in a corner, with the clothes drawn up to his chin, a man lay in bed. The cheeks were covered by a three days' beard; they were ridged into deep hollows; large eyes, very wide open, looked out under a mass of uncombed hair, and as the face turned round on the pillow and looked at me without any change of expression I recognised Peter Waydelin. The woman, seeing me in the glass, nodded at my reflection, and said, as she drew a black pencil through her eyelashes: 'You'll excuse me, won't you? I have to be at the hall in ten minutes. Don't stand on ceremony; there's Peter. He'll be glad to see you, poor dear!' She spoke in a common and affected voice, and I thought her a deplorable person, with her carefully curled yellow hair, her rouged and powdered cheeks, her mouth glistening with lip salve, her big, empty blue eyes with their blackened under-lids, her fat arms and shoulders, the tawdry finery of her costume, half on and half off the body. I moved towards the bed, and Waydelin looked up at me with a queer, mournful smile.

'It was good of you to come,' he said, stretching out a long, thin hand to me; 'Clara has to go out, and we can have a talk. How do you like the last thing I've done?'

I lifted the drawing which was lying on the bed. It was a portrait of the woman before the glass, just as she looked now, one of the most powerful of his drawings, crueller even than usual in its insistence on the brutality of facts: the crude contrasts of bone and fat, the vulgar jaw, the brassy eyes, the reckless, conscious attitude. Every line seemed to have been drawn with hatred. I looked at Mrs. Waydelin. She had finished dressing, and she came up to the bedside to say good-bye to Peter. 'Horrid thing,' she said, nodding her head at the drawing; 'not a bit like me, is it? I assure you none of them like it at the hall. They say it doesn't do me justice. I'm sure I hope not.' I bowed and murmured something. 'Good-bye, Peter,' she said, smiling down at him in a kindly, hurried way, 'I'll come back as soon as I can,' and with a nod to me she was out of the room.

Peter drew himself slowly up in the bed, pointed to a shawl, which I wrapped round his shoulders, and then, looking at me a little defiantly, said: 'My theory, do you remember? of living the life of my models!

She is a very nice woman and an excellent model, and they appreciate her very much at "Collins's"; but it appears that I have no gift for domesticity.'

I scarcely knew what to say. While I hesitated he went on: 'Don't suppose I have any illusions, or, indeed, ever had. I married that woman because I couldn't help doing it, but I knew what I was doing all the time. Have you ever been in Belgium? There is stuff they give you there to drink called Advokat, which you begin by hating, but after a time you can't get on without it. She is like Advokat.'

'You are ill, Waydelin,' I said, 'and you speak bitterly. I don't like to hear you speak like that about your wife.'

Waydelin stared at me curiously. 'So you are going to defend her against my brutality,' he said. 'I will give you every opportunity. Did you know I was married?'

I shook my head.

'I have been married three years,' he said, 'and I never told even you. I know you did not take me at my word when I talked about how one had to live in order to paint as I painted, but I did not tell you half. I have been living, if you like to call it so, systematically, not as a stranger in a foreign country which he stares at over his Baedeker, but as like a native as I could, and with no return ticket in my pocket. Why shouldn't one be as thorough in one's life as in one's drawing? Is it possible for one to be otherwise, if one is really in earnest in either? And the odd thing is, as you will say, I didn't live in that way because I wanted to do it for my art, but something deeper than my art, a profound, low instinct, drew me to these people, to this life, without my own will having anything to do with it. My work has been much more sincere than any one suspected. It used to amuse me when the papers classed me with the Decadents of a moment, and said that I was probably living in a suburban villa, with a creeper on the front wall. I have never cared for anything but London, or in London for anything but here, or the Hampstead Road, or about the Docks. I never really chose the music-halls or the public-houses; they chose me. I made the music-halls my clubs; I lived in them, for the mere delight of the thing; I liked the glitter, false, barbarous, intoxicating, the violent animality of the whole spectacle, with its imbecile words, faces, gestures, the very heat and odour, like some concentrated odour of the human crowd, the irritant music, the audience! I went there, as I went to public-houses, as I walked about the streets at night, as I kept company with vagabonds, because there was a craving in me that I could not quiet. I fitted in theories with my facts; and that is how I came to paint my pictures.'

As he spoke, with bitter ardour, I looked at him as if I were seeing him for the first time. The room, the woman, that angry drawing on the bed, and the dishevelled man dying there, just at the moment when he had learnt everything that such experiences could teach him, fell of a sudden into a revealing relation with each other. I did not know whether to feel that the man had been heroic or a fool; there had been, it was clear to me, some obscure martyrdom going on, not the less for art's sake because it came out of the mere necessity of things. A great pity came over me, and all I could say was, 'But, my dear friend, you have been very unhappy!'

'I never wanted to be happy,' said Waydelin; 'I wanted to live my own life and do my own work; and if I die to-morrow (as likely enough I may), I shall have done both things. My work satisfies me, and, because of that, so does my life.'

'Are you very ill?' I asked.

'Dead, relatively speaking,' he said in his jaunty way, which death itself could not check in him; 'I'm only waiting on some celestial order of precedence in these matters, which, I confess, I don't understand. So it was good of you to come; I would like to arrange with you about what is to be done with my work, presently, when they will have to accept me. I always said that I had only to die in order to be appreciated.'

I had a long talk with him, and I promised to carry out his wishes. All the money that his pictures brought in was to go to his wife, but, as he said, she would not know what to do with them if they were left in her own hands, not even how to turn them into money. He was quite certain that they would sell; he knew exactly the value of what he had done, and he knew how and when work finds its own level.

I sat beside the bed, talking, for more than two hours. He could no longer do much work, he said, and he hated being alone when he was not working. But it amused him to talk, for a change. 'Clara talks when she is here,' he said, with one of his queer smiles. I promised to come back and see him again. 'Come soon,' he said, 'if you want to be sure of finding me.'

I went back two days afterwards, a little later in the evening so that I need not meet Mrs. Waydelin, and he seemed better. He had shaved, his hair was brushed and combed, and he was sitting up in bed, with the shawl thrown lightly about his shoulders.

'Would you like to know,' he began, almost at once, 'how I came to paint in what we will call, if you please, my final manner? One day, at the theatre, I saw Sada Yacco. She taught me art.'

'What do you mean?' I said.

'Look here,' he went on, 'they say everything has been done in art. But no, there is at least one thing that remains for us. Have you ever seen Sada Yacco? When I saw her for the first time I said to myself, "I have found out the secret of Japanese art." I had never been able to understand how it was that the Japanese, who can imitate natural things, a bird, a flower, the rain, so perfectly, have chosen to give us, instead of a woman's face, that blind oval, in which the eyes, nose, and mouth seem to have been made to fit a pattern. When I saw Sada Yacco I realised that the Japanese painters had followed nature as closely in their woman's faces as in their birds and flowers, but that they had studied them from the women of the Green Houses, the women who make up, and that Japanese women, made up for the stage or for the factitious life of the Green Houses, look exactly like these elegant, unnatural images of the painters. What a new kind of reality that opened up to me, as if a window had suddenly opened in a wall! Here, I said to myself, is something that the painters of Europe have never done; it remains for me to do it. I will study nature under the paint by which woman, after all, makes herself more woman; the ensign of her trade, her flag as the enemy. I will get at the nature of this artificial thing, at the skin underneath it, and the soul under the skin. Watteau and the Court painters have given us the dainty, exterior charm of the masquerade, woman when she plays at being woman, among "lyres and flutes." Degas, of course, has done something of what I want to do, but only a part, and with other elements in his pure design, the drawing of Ingres, setting itself new tasks, exercising its technique upon shapeless bodies in tubs, and the strained muscles of the dancer's leg as she does "side-practice." What I am going to do is to take all the ugliness, gross artifice, crafty mechanism, of sex disguising itself for its own ends: that new nature which vice and custom make out of the honest curves and colours of natural things.

'Well, I have tried to do that; in all my best work, my work of the last two or three years, I have done it. I am sure that what I have done is a new thing, and I think it is the one new thing left to us Western painters.'

'I am beginning to understand you,' I said, 'and I have not always found it easy. When I admire you, it has so often seemed to me irrational. I am gradually finding out your logic. Do you remember those talks we used to have at Bognor, one in particular, when you told me about your way of seeing?'

'Yes, yes,' he said, 'I remember, but there was one thing I am almost sure I did not tell you, and it is curious. I don't understand it myself. Do you know what it is to be haunted by colours? There is something like a temptation of the devil, to me, in the colour green. I know it is the commonest colour in nature, it is a good, honest colour, it is the grass, the trees, the leaves, very often the sea. But no, it isn't like that that it comes to me. To me it is an aniline dye, poisoning nature. I adore and hate it. I can never get away from it. If I paint a group outside a café at Montmartre by gas-light or electric light, I paint a green shadow on the faces, and I suppose the green shadow isn't there; yet I paint it. Some tinge of green finds its way invariably into my flesh-colour; I see something green in rouged cheeks, in peroxide-of-hydrogen hair; green lays hold of this poor, unhappy flesh that I paint, as if anticipating the colour-scheme of the grave. I know it, and yet I can't help doing it; I can't explain to you how it is that I at once see and don't see a thing; but so it is.

'And it grew upon me too like an obsession. I always wanted to keep my eyes perfectly clear, so that I could make my own arrangements of things for myself, deliberately; but this, in some unpleasant way, seemed horribly like "nature taking the pen out of one's hand and writing,'' as somebody once said about a poet. I would rather do all the writing myself; the more so, as I have to translate as I go.'

He broke off suddenly, as if a wave of exhaustion had come over him. His eyes, which had been very bright, had gone dull again, and he let his head droop till the chin rested on his breast.

'I have tired you,' I said, 'you must not talk any more. Try to go to sleep now, and I will come back another day.'

'To-morrow?' he said, looking at me sleepily.

I promised. When I went back the next day he was weaker, but he insisted on sitting up and talking. He spoke of his wife, without affection and without bitterness; he spoke of death, with so little apprehension, or even curiosity, that I was startled. His art was still a much more realisable thing to him.

'Do you believe in God, religion, and all that?' he said. 'To tell you the honest truth, I have never been able to take a vital interest in those or any other abstract matters: I am so well content with this world, if it would only go on existing, and I don't in the least care how it came into being, or what is going to happen to it after I have moved on. I suppose one ought to feel some sort of reverence for something, for an unknown power, at least, which has certainly worked to good purpose. Well, I can't. I don't know what reverence is. If I were quite healthy, I should be a pagan, and choose, well! Dionysus Zagreus, a Bacchus who has been in hell, to worship after my fashion, in some religious kind of "orgie on the mountains." That is how somebody explains the origin of religion, or was it of religious hymns? I forget; but, you see, having had this rickety sort of body to drag about with me, I have never been able to follow any of my practical impulses of that sort, and I have had to be no more than an unemployed atheist, ready to gibe at the gods he doesn't understand.

'I am afraid even in art,' he went on, as if leaving unimportant things for the one thing important, 'I don't find it easy to look up to anybody, at least in a way that anybody can be imagined as liking. I have never gone very much to the National Gallery, not because I don't think Venetian and Florentine pictures quite splendid, painted when they were, but because I can get nothing out of them that is any good for me, now in this all but twentieth century. You won't expect me, of all people, to prate about progress, but, all the same, it's no use going to Botticelli for hints about modern painting. We have different things to look at, and see them differently. A man must be of his time, else why try to put his time on the canvas? There are people, of course, who don't, if you call them painters: Watts, Burne-Jones, Moreau, that sort of hermit-crab. But I am talking about painting life and making it live. If it comes to making pictures for churches and curiosity shops!'

He spoke eagerly, but in a voice which grew more and more tired, and with long pauses. I was going to try to get him to rest when the front door opened noisily and I heard Mrs. Waydelin's voice in the hall. I heard other voices, men's and women's, feet coming up the stairs. I looked apprehensively at Waydelin. He showed no surprise. I heard a door open on the landing; then, a moment after, it was shut, and Mrs. Waydelin came into the bedroom, flushed and perspiring through the paint, and ran up to the bed. 'I have brought a few friends in to supper,' she said. 'They won't disturb you, you know, and I couldn't very well get out of it.'

She would have entered into explanations, but Waydelin cut her short. 'I have not the least objection,' he said. 'I must only ask you to apologise to them for my absence. I am hardly entertaining at present.'

She stared at him, as if wondering what he meant; then she asked me if I would join her at supper, and I declined; then went to the dressing-table, took up a pot of vaseline and looked at her eyelashes in the glass; then put it down again, came back to the bed, told Peter Waydelin to cheer up, and bounced out of the room.

I could see that Waydelin was now very tired and in need of sleep. I got up to go. The partition between the two rooms must have been very thin, for I could hear a champagne-cork drawn, the shrill laughter of women, men talking loudly, and chairs being moved about the floor. 'I don't mind,' he said, seeing what I was thinking, 'so long as they don't sing. But they won't begin to sing for two hours yet, and I can get some sleep. Good-night. Perhaps I shall not see you again.'

'May I come again?' I said.

'I always like seeing you,' he said, smiling, and thereupon turned over on the pillow, just as he was, and fell asleep.

I looked at his face as he lay there, with the shawl about his shoulders and his hands outside the bedclothes. The jaw hung loose, the cheeks were pinched with exhaustion, sweat stood out about the eyes. The sudden collapse into sleep alarmed me. I could not leave him in such a state, and with no one at hand but those people supping in the next room. I sat down in a corner near the bed and waited.

As I sat there listening to the exuberant voices, I wondered by what casual or quixotic impulse Waydelin had been led to marry the woman, and whether the woman was really heartless because she sat drinking champagne with her friends of the music-hall while her husband, a man of genius in his way, lay dying in the next room. I forced myself to acknowledge that she had probably no suspicion of how near she was to being a widow, that Waydelin would deceive her to the end in this matter, and the last thing in the world he would desire would be to see Mrs. Waydelin in tears at the foot of the bed.

As time went on the supper-party got merrier, but Waydelin did not stir, and I sat still in my corner. It was probably in about two hours, as he had foreseen, that a chord was struck on the piano, and a man began to sing a music-hall song in a rough, facile voice. At the sound Waydelin shivered through his whole body and woke up. In a very weak voice he asked me for water. I brought him a glass of water and held it to his lips. He drank a little and then pushed it away and began shivering again. 'Let me send for a doctor,' I said, but he seized my hand, and said violently that he would see no doctor. In the next room the piano rattled and all the voices joined in the chorus. I distinguished the voice of Mrs. Waydelin. He seemed to be listening to it, and I said, 'Let me call her in.' 'Poor Clara may as well amuse herself,' he said, with his odd smile.

'What is the use? I feel very much as if I am going to die. Will it bother you: being here, I mean?' His voice seemed to grow weaker as he spoke, and his eyes stared. I left him and went hastily into the other room. The singer stopped abruptly, and the girl at the piano turned round. I saw the remains of supper on the table, the empty glasses and bottles, the chairs tilted back, the cigars, tobacco-smoke, the flushed faces, rings, artificial curls; and then Mrs. Waydelin came to me out of the midst of them, looking almost frightened, and said, 'What's the matter?' 'Get rid of these people at once,' I said in a low voice, 'and send for a doctor.' Her face sobered instantly, she took one step to the bell, was about to ring it, then turned and said to one of the men, 'Go for a doctor, Jim,' and to the others, 'You'll go, all of you, quietly?' and then she came with me into the bedroom.

Waydelin lay shivering and quaking on the bed; he seemed very conscious and wholly preoccupied with himself. He never looked at the woman as she flung herself on the floor by the bedside and began to cry out to him and kiss his hand. The tears ran down over her cheeks, leaving ghastly furrows in the wet powder, which clotted and caked under them. The curl was beginning to come out of her too yellow hair, which straggled in wisps about her ears. She sobbed in gulps, and entreated him to look at her and forgive her. At that he looked, and as he looked life seemed to revive in his eyes. He motioned to me to lift him up. I lifted him against the pillows, and in a weak voice he asked me for drawing-paper and a pencil. 'Don't move,' he said to his wife, who knelt there struck into rigid astonishment, with terror and incomprehension in her eyes. The pose, its grotesque horror, were finer than the finest of his inventions. He made a few scrawls on the paper, trying to fix that last and best pose of his model. But he could no longer guide the pencil, and he let it drop out of his hand with a look of helplessness, almost of despair, and sank down in the bed and shut his eyes. He did not open them again. The doctor came, and tried all means to revive him, but without success. Something in him seemed consciously to refuse to come back to life. He lay for some time, dying slowly, with his eyes fast shut, and it was only when the doctor had felt his heart and found no movement that he knew he was dead.

AN AUTUMN CITY.

AN AUTUMN CITY.

To Daniel Roserra life was a matter of careful cultivation. He respected nature, for what might be cunningly extracted from nature; provided only that one's aim was a quite personal thing, willingly subject to surroundings on its way to the working out of itself. He tended his soul as one might tend some rare plant; careful above most things of the earth it was to take root in. And so he thought much of the influence of places, of the image a place makes for itself in the consciousness, of all that it might do in the formation of a beautiful or uncomely disposition. Places had virtues of their own for him; he supposed that he had the quality of divining their secrets; at all events, if they were places to which he could possibly be sensitive. Much of his time was spent in travelling, in a leisurely way, about Europe; not for the sake of seeing anything in particular, for he had no interest in historical associations or in the remains of ugly things that happened to be old, or in visiting the bric-a-brac museums of the fine arts which make some of the more tolerable countries tedious. He chose a city, a village, or a seashore for its charm, its appeal to him personally; nothing else mattered.

When Roserra was forty he fell in love, quite suddenly, though he had armed himself, as he imagined, against such disturbances of the æsthetic life, and was invulnerable. He had always said that a woman was like a liqueur: a delightful luxury, to be taken with discretion. He feared the influence of a companion in his delicate satisfactions: he realised that a woman might not even be a sympathetic companion. He had, it is true, often wished to try the experiment, a risky one, of introducing a woman to one of his friends among cities; it was a temptation, but he remembered how rarely such introductions work well among people. Would the cities be any more fortunate?

When, however, he fell in love, all hesitation was taken out of his hands by the mere force of things. Livia Dawlish was remarkably handsome, some people thought her beautiful; she was tall and dark, and had a sulky, enigmatical look that teased and attracted him. Some who knew her very well said that it meant nothing, and was merely an accident of colour and form, like the green eye of the cat or the golden eye of the buffalo. Roserra tried to study her, but he could get no point of view. He felt something that he had never felt before, and this something was like a magnetic current flowing subtly from her to him; perhaps, like the magnetic rocks in the 'Arabian Nights,' ready to draw out all the nails and bolts of his ship, and drown him among the wrecked splinters of his life.

He was rich, not too old, of a good Cornish family; he could be the most charming companion in the world; he knew so many things and so many places, and was never tedious about them: Livia thought him on the whole the most suitable husband whom she was likely to meet.

She was happy when he asked her to marry him, and she married him without a misgiving. She was not reflective.

After the marriage they went straight to Paris, and Roserra was surprised and delighted to find how childishly happy Livia could be among new surroundings. She had always wanted to see Paris, because of its gaiety, its bright wickedness, its names of pleasure and fashion. Everything delighted her; she seemed even to admire a little indiscriminatingly. She thought the Sainte-Chapelle the most beautiful thing in Paris.

They went back to London with more luggage than they had brought with them, and for six months Livia was quite happy. She wore her Paris hats and gowns, she was admired, she went to the theatre; she seemed to get on with Roserra even better than she had expected.

During all this time Roserra seemed to have found out very little about his wife. It gave him more pleasure to do what she wanted than it had ever given him to carry out his own wishes. So far, they had never had a dispute; he seemed to have put his own individuality aside as if it no longer meant anything to him. But he had not yet discovered her individuality from among her crowds of little likes and dislikes, which meant nothing. Nothing had come out yet from behind those enigmatical eyes; but he was waiting; they would open, and there would be treasure there.

Gradually, while he was waiting, his old self began to come back to him. He must do as he had always wanted to do: introduce the most intimate of his cities to a woman. Autumn was beginning; he thought of Arles, which was an autumn city, and the city which meant more to him than almost any other. He must share Arles with Livia.

Livia had heard of the Arlesiennes, she remembered Paris, and, though she was a little reluctant to leave the new London into which she had come since her marriage, she consented without apparent unwillingness.

They went by sea to Marseilles, and Livia wished they were not going any further. Roserra smiled a little satisfied smile; she was so pleased with even slight, superficial things, she could get pleasure out of the empty sunlight and obvious sea of Marseilles. When the deeper appeal of Arles came to her, that new world in which one went clean through the exteriorities of modern life, how she would respond to it!

They reached Arles in the afternoon, and drove to the little old-fashioned house which Roserra had taken in the square which goes uphill from the Amphitheatre, with the church of Notre Dame la Major in the corner. Livia looked about her vividly as the cab rattled round twenty sharp angles, in the midst of narrow streets, on that perilous journey. Here were the Arlesiennes, standing at doorways, walking along the pavements, looking out of windows. She scarcely liked to admit to herself that she had seen prettier faces elsewhere. The costume, certainly, was as fine as its reputation; she would get one, she thought, to wear, for amusement, in London. And the women were a noble race; they walked nobly, they had beautiful black hair, sometimes stately and impressive features. But she had expected so much more than that; she had expected a race of goddesses, and she found no more than a townful of fine-looking peasants.

‘Do not judge too quickly,’ said Roserra to her; ‘you must judge neither the place nor the people until you have lived yourself into their midst. The first time I came here I was disappointed. Gradually I began to see why it was that even the guide-books tell you to come to this quiet, out-of-the-way place, made up of hovels that were once palaces.’

‘I will wait,’ said Livia contentedly. The queer little house, with its homely furniture, the gentle, picturesque woman who met her at the door, amused her. It was certainly an adventure.

Next day, and the days following, they walked about the town, and Roserra felt that his own luxuriating sensations could hardly fail to be shared by Livia, though she said little and seemed at times absent-minded. They strolled among the ruins of the theatre begun under Augustus, and among the coulisses of the great amphitheatre; they sat on the granite steps; they went up the hundred steps of the western tower. From the cloisters of St. Trophime they went across to the museum opposite, where a kindly little dwarf showed them the altar to Leda, the statue of Mithras, and the sarcophagi with the Good Shepherd. He sold them some photographs of Arlesian women: one was very beautiful. 'That is my sister,' he said shyly.

When the soul of Autumn made for itself a body, it made Arles. An autumn city, hinting of every gentle, resigned, reflective way of fading out of life, of effacing oneself in a world to which one no longer attaches any value; always remembering itself, always looking into a mournfully veiled mirror which reflects something at least of what it was, Arles sits in the midst of its rocky plains, by the side of its river, among the tombs. Everything there seems to grow out of death, and to be returning thither. The town rises above its ruins, does not seem to be even yet detached from them. The remains of the theatre look down on the public garden; one comes suddenly on a Roman obelisk and the fragments of Roman walls; a Roman column has been built into the wall of one of the two hotels which stand in the Forum, now the Place du Forum; and the modern, the comparatively modern houses, have an air which is neither new nor old, but entirely sympathetic with what is old. They are faded, just a little dilapidated, not caring to distinguish themselves from the faint colours, the aged slumber, of the very ancient things about them.

Livia tried to realise what it was that charmed Roserra in all this. To her there was no comfort in it; it depressed her; in the air itself there was something of decay. There was a smell of dead leaves everywhere, the moisture of stone, the sodden dampness of earth, water forming into little pools on the ground, creeping out of the earth and into the earth again. There was dust on everything; the trees that close in almost the whole city as with a leafy wall were dust-grey even in sunlight. The Aliscamps seemed to her drearier than even a modern cemetery, and she wondered what it was that drew Roserra to them, with a kind of fascination. On the way there, along the Avenue Victor Hugo, there were some few signs of life; the cafés, the Zouaves going in and out of their big barrack, the carts coming in from the country; and in the evening the people walked there. But she hated the little melancholy public garden at the side, with its paths curving upwards to the ruined walls and arches of the Roman theatre, its low balustrades of crumbling stone, its faint fountains, greenish grey. It was a place, she thought, in which no one could ever be young or happy; and the road which went past it did but lead to the tombs. Roserra told her that Dante, when he was in hell, and saw the 'modo più amaro' in which the people there are made into alleys of living tombs, remembered Arles:

'Si com' ad Arli ove 'l Rodano stagna.'

She laughed uneasily, with a half shudder. The tombs are moved aside now from the Aliscamps, into the little secluded Allée des Tombeaux, where they line both sides of the way, empty stone trough after empty stone trough, with here and there a more pompous sarcophagus. There is a quiet path between them, which she did not even like to walk in, leading to the canal and the bowling-green; and in the evening the old men creep out and sit among the tombs.

At first there was bright sunshine every day, but the sun scorched; and then it set in to rain. One night a storm wakened her, and it seemed to her that she had never heard such thunder, or seen such lightning, as that which shook the old roof under which she lay, and blazed and flickered at the window until it seemed to be licking up the earth with liquid fire. The storm faded out in a morning of faint sunshine; only the rain clung furtively about the streets all day.

Day after day it rained, and Livia sat in the house, listlessly reading the novels which she had brought with her, or staring with fierce impatience out of the window. The rain came down steadily, ceaselessly, drawing a wet grey curtain over the city.

Roserra liked that softened aspect which came over things in this uncomfortable weather; he walked every day through the streets in which the water gathered in puddles between the paving-stones, and ran in little streams down the gutters; he found a kind of autumnal charm in the dripping trees and soaked paths of the Aliscamps; a peaceful, and to him pathetic and pleasant, odour of decay. Livia went out with him once, muffled in a long cloak, and keeping her whole face carefully under the umbrella. She wanted to know where he was taking her, and why; she shivered, sneezed, and gave one or two little coughs. When she saw the ground of the Aliscamps, and the first trees began to drip upon her umbrella with a faint tap-tapping on the strained silk, she turned resolutely, and hurried Roserra straight back to the house.

After that she stayed indoors day after day, getting more irritable every day. She took up one book after another, read a little, and then laid it down. She walked to and fro in the narrow room, with nothing, as she said, to think about, and nothing to see if she looked out of the window. There was the square, every stone polished by the rain; the other houses in the square, most of them shuttered; the little church in the corner, with its monotonous bell, its few worshippers. She knew them all; they were mostly women, plain, elderly women; not one of them had any interest, or indeed existence, for her. She wondered vaguely why they went backwards and forwards, between their houses and the church, in such a regular way. Could it really amuse them? Could they really believe certain things so firmly that it was worth while taking all that trouble in order to be on the right side at last? She supposed so, and ended her speculations.

When Roserra was with her, he annoyed her by not seeming to mind the weather. He would come in from a walk, and, if she seemed to be busy reading, would sit down cheerfully by the stove, and really read the book which he had in his hand. She looked at him over the pages of hers, hating to see him occupied when she could not fix her mind on anything. She felt imprisoned; not that she really wanted to go out: it was the not being able to that fretted her.

About the time when, if she had been in London, she would have had tea, the uneasiness came over her most actively. She would go upstairs to her room, and sit watching herself pityingly in the glass; or she would try on hat after hat, hats which had come from Paris, and were meant for Paris or London, hats which she could not possibly wear here, where her smallest and simplest ones seemed out of place. Sometimes she brought herself back into a good temper by the mere pleasurable feel of the things; and she would run downstairs forgetting that she was in Arles.

One afternoon, when she was in one of her easiest moods, Roserra persuaded her to attend Benediction with him at the church of Notre Dame la Major, in the corner of the square. The church was quite dark, and she could only dimly see the high-altar, draped in white, and with something white rising up from its midst, like a figure mysteriously poised among the unlighted candles. Hooded figures passed, and knelt with bowed heads; presently a light passed across the church, and a lamp was let down by a chain, lighted, and drawn up again to its place. Then a few candles were lighted, and only then did she see the priest kneeling motionless before the altar. The chanting was very homely, like that in a village church; there was even the village church's harmonium; but the monotony of one air repeated over and over again brought even to Livia some sense of a harmony between this half-drowsy service and the slumbering city outside. They waited until the service was over, the priests went out, the lamps and the candles were extinguished, and the hooded figures, after a little silence, began to move again in the dimness of the church.

Sometimes she would go with Roserra to the cloisters of St. Trophime, where Arles, as he said, seemed to withdraw into its most intimate self. The oddness of the whole place amused her. Every side was built in a different century: the north in the ninth, the east in the thirteenth, the west in the fourteenth, and the south in the sixteenth; and the builders, century by century, have gathered into this sadly battered court a little of the curious piety of age after age, working here to perpetuate, not only the legends of the Church, but the legends that have their home about Arles. Again and again, among these naïve sculptures, one sees the local dragon, the man-eating Tarasque who has given its name to Tarascon. The place is full of monsters, and of figures tortured into strange dislocations. Adam swings ape-like among the branches of the apple-tree, biting at the leaves before he reaches the apple. Flames break out among companies of the damned, and the devil sits enthroned above his subjects. A gentle Doctor of the Church holding a book, and bending his head meditatively sideways, was shown to Livia as King Solomon; with, of course, in the slim saint on the other side of the pillar, the Queen of Sheba. Broken escutcheons, carved in stone, commemorate bishops on the walls. There is no order, or division of time; one seems shut off equally from the present and from any appreciable moment of the past; shut in with the same vague and timeless Autumn that has moulded Arles into its own image.

But it was just this, for which Roserra loved Arles above all other places, that made Livia more and more acutely miserable. Wandering about the streets which bring one back always to one's starting-point, or along the boulevards which suggest the beginning of the country, but set one no further into it, nothing seems to matter very much, for nothing seems very much to exist. In Livia, as Roserra was gradually finding out, there was none of that sympathetic submissiveness to things which meant for him so much of the charm of life. She wanted something definite to do, somewhere definite to go; her mind took no subtle colour from things, nor was there any active world within her which could transmute everything into its own image. She was dependent on an exterior world, cut to a narrow pattern, and, outside that, nothing had any meaning for her. He began to wonder if he had made the irremediable mistake, and, in his preoccupation with that uneasy idea, everything seemed changed; he, too, began to grow restless.

Meanwhile Livia was deciding that she certainly had made a mistake, unless she could, after all, succeed in getting her own way; and to do that she would have to take things into her own hands, much more positively than she had yet done. She would walk with him when it was fine, because there was nothing else to do. Once they walked out to the surprising remains of the abbey of Mont-Major, and it began to rain, and they lingered uncomfortably about the ruins and in the subterranean chapel. She walked back with him, nursing a fine hatred in silence. She turned it over in her heart, and it grew and gathered, like a snowball rolled over and over in the snow. It was comprehensive and unreasoning, and it forgot the small grievance out of which it rose, in a sense of the vast grievance into which it had swollen. To Roserra such moods, which were now becoming frequent, were unintelligible, and he suffered from them like one who has to find his way through a camp of his enemies in the dark.

When they got back to the house, Livia would silently take up a book and sit motionless for hours, turning over the pages without raising her eyes, or showing a consciousness of his presence. He pretended to do the same, but his eyes wandered continually, and he had to read every page twice over. He wanted to speak, but never knew what to say, when she was in this prickly state of irritation. To her, his critical way of waiting, and doing nothing, became an oppression. And his silence, and what she supposed to be his indifference, grew upon her like a heavy weight, until the silent woman, who sat there reading sullenly, felt the impulse to rise and fling away the book, and shriek aloud.

Livia did not say that she wished to go away from Arles, anywhere from Arles, but the desire spoke in all her silences. She made no complaint, but Roserra saw an unfriendliness growing up in her eyes which terrified him. She held him, as she had held him since their first meeting, by a kind of magnetism which he had come to realise was neither love nor sympathy.

He felt that he could hate her, and yet not free himself from that influence. What was to be done? He would have to choose; his life of the future could no longer be his life of the past. His introduction of a woman to his best friend had been unfortunate, as such introductions always are, in one way or another. He had tended his soul for more than half a lifetime, waited upon it delicately, served it with its favourite food; and now something stronger had come forward and said: No more. What was it? He had no wish to speculate; it mattered little whether it was what people called his higher nature, or what they called his lower nature, which had brought him to this result. At least he had some recompense.

When he told Livia that he had decided to go back to Marseilles ('Arles does not suit you,' he said; 'you have not been well since we came here') Livia flung herself into his arms with an uncontrollable delight. On the night before they left, he sat for a long time, alone, under the Allée des Tombeaux. When he came back, Livia was watching for him from the window. She ran to the door and opened it.

It was midday when they reached Marseilles. The sun burned on the blue water, which lay hot, motionless, and glittering. There was not a breath of wind, and the dust shone on the roads like a thick white layer of powder. The light beat downwards from the blue sky, and upwards from the white dust of the roads. The heat was enveloping; it wrapped one from head to foot like the caress of a hot furnace. Roserra pressed his hands to his forehead, as he leaned with Livia over the terrace above the sea; his head throbbed, it was an effort even to breathe. He remembered the grey coolness of the Allée des Tombeaux, where the old men sat among the tombs. A nausea, a suffocating nausea, rose up within him as he felt the heat and glare of this vulgar, exuberant paradise of snobs and tourists. He sickened with revolt before this over-fed nature, sweating the fat of life. He looked at Livia; she stood there, perfectly cool under her sunshade, turning to watch a carriage that came towards them in a cloud of dust. She was once more in her element, she was quite happy; she had plunged back into the warmth of life out of that penetential chillness of Arles; and it was with real friendliness that she turned to Roserra, as she saw his eyes fixed upon her.

SEAWARD LACKLAND.

SEAWARD LACKLAND.

Seaward Lackland was born on a day of storm, when his father was out at sea in his fishing-boat; and the mother vowed that if her husband came home alive the boy should be dedicated to the Lord. Isaac Lackland was the only one of his mates who came home alive out of the storm; and the boy got the queer name of Seaward because his mother had looked out to sea, as soon as she had strength enough to be propped up in bed, praying for her husband every minute of the time until he came back. She could see the sea through the little leaded windows of the cottage which stood right on the edge of the cliff above Carbis Bay. The child's earliest recollection was of the shape and colour of the waves, between the diamond leadings, as he was held up to the window in his mother's arms. It was like looking at pictures in frames, he thought afterwards.

The child was dedicated to the Lord. Isaac knelt down by the bedside and prayed over him as Mary held him in her arms, and when he got up from his knees he said: 'Mary, if the boy lives, please God, he shall have his schooling; and I wouldn't say but he might make a fine preacher of the Gospel.'

'It was little schooling Peter ever had,' said his wife.

'Peter was wanted in the boat; this youngster can wait.'

'Oh, Isaac, do you think he'll go to America, when he's grown up, like Peter?'

'No, Mary, he'll not go farther than Land's End by land, or Mount's Bay by sea, if what I feel is the truth. We've given him to the Lord, and I say the Lord will lend him to us.'

Mary said under her breath, 'Oh, please, Lord Jesus,' several times over, with her eyes tight shut, as she did when she seemed to pray best. Her first son had been drowned at sea, her second had run away from home and gone to America; and she hardly dared think of what would happen to this one. But they had done what they could. Would not God watch over him, and would he not be kind to her because she had given up some of her rights in the child?

The child grew strong and gentle; he learned quickly what he was taught, and when he had learned it he would set himself to think out what it really meant, and why it meant that and not something else. He was always good to his mother, and as soon as he had learned to read he would read to her out of a few books which she cared for, the Bible chiefly, and Bogatzky's 'Golden Treasury,' and the 'Pilgrim's Progress.' Through reading it over and over to his mother, he got to know a good part of the Bible by heart, and he was always asking what this and that puzzling passage meant exactly, and, when he got no satisfying answer, trying to puzzle out a meaning for himself.

Every day he went in to the Wesleyan day-school at St. Ives, and as he walked there and back along the cliff-path, generally alone, all sorts of whimsical ideas turned over in his head, ideas that came to him out of books, and out of what people said, and out of the queer world in which he found himself, half land and half water. It was always changing about him and yet always there, in the same place, with its regular and yet unaccountable tides and harvests. Sometimes there was a storm at sea and all the boats did not come back, and the people he had talked with yesterday had gone, like the stone he kicked over the cliff in walking, or he saw them carried up the beach with covered faces. Death is always about the life of fishermen, and he saw it more visibly and a thing more natural and expected than it must seem to most children.

He had always loved the sea, and it was his greatest delight to be taken out when the pilchards were in the bay, and to sit in the boat watching the silver shoals as they crowded into the straining net. He waited for the cry of 'Heva!' from the watchman on the hill, and often sat beside him, or stared out to sea through his long telescope, longing to be the first to catch the moving glitter of silver. He talked with the men 'like a grown-up chap' they said, and they talked with him as if he were a man, telling him stories, not the stories they would have told children, but things out of their own lives, and ideas that came into their heads as they lay out at sea all night in the drift-boats.

There was one old man with whom the boy liked best to talk, because he had been a sailor in his youth and had gone through all the seas and landed at many ports, and had been shipwrecked on a wild island and lived for a year among savages, and he was not like the other men, who had always been fishers, and thought Plymouth probably as good as London. Old Minshull seemed to the boy a very clever as well as a far-travelled person, and he discussed some of his difficulties with him and got help, he thought, from the old man.

His difficulties were chiefly religious ones. He knew much more about the Bible than about the world, and his imagination was constantly at work on those absorbing stories in Kings and Judges, and all sorts of cloudy pictures which he made up for himself out of obscure hints in the Prophets and the

Apocalypse. The old Cornishman knew his Bible pretty well, but not so well as the boy; and the boy would bring the book out on the cliff and read over some of the confusing things; murders, with God's approval, it seemed, and treacheries which set nations free, and are called 'blessed,' and the sins of the saints; and then mysterious curses and unintelligible idolatries, and the Scarlet Woman and Jonah's whale. He liked best the Old Testament, and had formed a clear idea of God the Father as a perfectly just but constantly avenging deity; it pained him if he could not bring everything into agreement with this idea; and in the New Testament he was often perplexed by what Jesus seemed to do and undo in the divine affairs. The old sailor turned over all these matters in his head; they were new to him, but he faced them, and he was sometimes able to suggest just the common-sense way out of the difficulty.

When Mary Lackland thought the boy old enough to understand the full meaning of it, she told him how, on the day of his birth, he had been dedicated to God, and she told him that he was never to forget this, but to think much of God's claims upon him, and to be certain of a special divine guardianship. He listened gravely, and promised. From that time he began to look on God, not with less awe, but with a more intimate sense of his continual presence, and a kind of filial feeling grew up in him quite simply, a love of God, which came as a great reality into his life. He felt that he must never dishonour this divine father, either by anything he did or by the way in which he thought of him even. Did not God, in a sense, depend on him as a father depends on his son, to keep his honour spotless, to be more jealous of that honour than of his own? That, or something like it, only half-defined to himself, was what he felt about God, to whom his whole life had been dedicated.

When he had finished his schooling, the boy joined his father in the boats, first, only by day, in the pilchard fishery, and then in the drift-boats that went far out, at night, in the herring season. His father was a silent man and rarely spoke to him; the other men half feared and half despised him, because he would not drink or play cards with them, and seemed to be generally either reading or thinking. He thought a great deal in those long nights, and when he was eighteen he began to be seriously alarmed because, so far as he knew, he was not converted.

He knew that he tried to do what was right, that he kept all the commandments, prayed night and morning, and that he had this instinctive love of God; but, according to the Methodists, all that was not enough. There must be a moment, they held, in every man's life when he becomes actively conscious of salvation; for every man there is a road to Damascus. Seaward Lackland had not yet come to that great crisis, and he waited for it, wondering what it was and when he would come to it.

He began to be troubled about his sins. The Bible said that every evil thought was a sin, and he did not know how many evil thoughts had come into his mind since he had become conscious of good and evil. A heavy burden of guilt weighed upon him; he could not put it aside; the more he thought of God, the more conscious did he become of that awful gulf which lay between him and God. Conversion, he had heard, bridged that gulf, or your sins fell off into it and were no more seen, even if, somewhere out of sight, they still existed, and would exist through all eternity. He would have despaired but for the hope of that miracle. And if I die, he said to himself, before I am converted?

He had always gone regularly to chapel on Sundays and as often as he could on week-days, but now he began to stay to the prayer-meetings after the service, and the minister at St. Ives noticed him, and often prayed with him and talked with him, but to no avail. A year went by, and he grew more despondent; even his love for God seemed to be slackening. One winter evening he heard that a famous revivalist was coming to Lelant. He thought he would go and hear him, then something seemed to urge him not to go; and he walked half-way there, and then back again, unable to make up his mind. Then, thinking that it was the devil who was trying to keep him away, he turned and walked resolutely to Lelant.

When he reached the chapel the service had begun. They were singing 'Jesu, lover of my soul,' and the preacher was standing inside the communion-rail (he liked to be nearer the people than he could be in the pulpit), and, as Seaward had the first glimpse of his face, he was singing as if every word of the hymn meant something wonderful to him. His eyes were wide open and shining; he held the closed hymn-book in both hands, rigid in front of him, and the people seemed already to have begun to feel that magnetic influence which he rarely failed to establish between himself and his hearers. After the hymn he stretched out his hand with a sudden gesture, and the people stood motionless for a moment and then gradually sank down on their knees as he began to pray rapidly. He seemed to be talking with God as if God were there in the midst of them, and as he passed from supplication into a kind of vivid statement, meant for the people rather than for the ear of God, there seemed to be a dialogue going on, as if the answers which he gave were hardly his own answers. He ended abruptly, and, without the harmonium, started an almost incoherent marching-song which was well known at all revivals. 'Hallelujah, send the glory!' he sang, and the voices of the people rose louder and louder and feet began to beat time to the heavy swing of the tune. Then he read the lesson and, without a pause, gave out the text, and began to speak.

Seaward Lackland had stepped into a pew near the door, and in the furthest corner of the chapel. Something in the preacher's voice had thrilled him, and he could not take his eyes off the long lean face, with its eyes like two burning coals, as it seemed to him, under a high receding forehead, from which the longish hair was brushed straight back. A huge moustache seemed to eat up the whole lower part of the face; and, as the man spoke, you saw nothing but the eyes and the quivering moustache. He began quietly, but, from the first, in the manner of one who has some all-important, and perhaps fatal, secret to tell. An uneasiness spread gradually through the chapel, which increased as he went on, with more urgency. People shifted in their seats, looked sideways at their neighbours, as if they feared to have betrayed themselves. Seaward felt himself turning hot and cold, for no reason that he could think of, and he took out his handkerchief and wiped his forehead. Near him he saw a young woman begin to cry, quite quietly, and a man not far off drew long breaths, that he could hear, almost like groans. The preacher's voice sounded like pathetic music, and he heard the tones rather than the words, tones which seemed to plead with him like music, asking something of him, as music did; and he wanted to respond; and he realised that it was his sin that was keeping him back from somehow completing the harmony, and he heard the preacher's voice talking with his soul, as if no one were there but they two. And God? God, perhaps.

By this time many people in the chapel were weeping, men groaned heavily, some jumped up crying 'Hallelujah!' and when the preacher ended and said, 'Now let us have silent prayer,' and came down into the aisle, and moved from pew to pew, one after another, as he spoke to them, got up, and went to the communion-rail, and knelt there, some of them with looks of great happiness. As Seaward saw the preacher coming near him, he felt a horrible fear, he did not know of what; and he rose quietly and stepped out into the night. But there, as he stood listening to some exultant voices which he still heard crying 'Hallelujah!' and as he felt the comfort of the cool air about him, and looked up at the stars and the thin white clouds which were rushing across the moon, a sense of quiet and well-being came over him, and he felt as if some bitter thing had been taken out of his soul, and he were free to love God and life at the same time, and not, as he had done till then, with alternate pangs of regret. 'If God so loved the world,' he found himself repeating; and the whole mercy of the text enveloped him. He walked home along the cliff like one in a dream: he only hoped not to waken out of that happiness.

From this time, year by year, Seaward Lackland grew more eager to do some work for God. He had made few friends among the young men and women of his own age; to the women he seemed at once too cold and too earnest, and the men were not quite certain of the comradeship of one who had so much book-learning, and who was so full of strange ideas. He did not mean to be unfriendly, but he had not the qualities that go to the easy making of friendships; and he found no one, neither man nor woman, with whom he had anything in common. The men respected him, for he was a good fisherman; but the women had for the most part a certain contempt for this large-boned, dull-eyed, heavy-jawed young man, who was never at his ease when he was with them, and who waited on no occasions for meeting them when they might have liked his company. The minister at St. Ives had noticed him and asked him sometimes to come and have a talk with him in his study. One day Lackland, warmed out of his reserve, had been talking so well that the minister said to him: 'I think we must have you as a local preacher, Lackland. What do you say to it?' He said quietly: 'I would like to try, sir.'

A few weeks afterwards, when the quarterly 'plan' was handed in at the Lacklands' cottage, and Mrs. Lackland had unfolded it eagerly, to see who were appointed to take the services at Carbis, she came suddenly upon a name which startled her so much, that the broad sheet of paper fluttered off her knees to the floor. 'My boy,' she said, as Seaward picked it up, and handed it back to her with a smile, 'I have been praying for this ever since I dedicated you to the Lord. Now I hardly know what there is left for me to pray for.'

'Pray that I may be steadfast in the faith, mother,' said Seaward.

'I will, my son; but I wouldn't mind trusting him for that.'

Everybody in the village was in Carbis Chapel to hear Seaward Lackland's first sermon. He was not afraid of them; he had something to say, and he was to speak for God; he said quietly all that was in his mind to say.

After the sermon, while he was walking across to the cottage with his father and mother, both very happy, and saying nothing at all, one or two of the older people stayed behind to discuss the sermon. 'Do you think he is quite orthodox?' said one of them, dubiously. 'I don't know,' said another; 'there were some ideas, sure enough, I never heard before; but I wouldn't say for that they weren't orthodox.' 'We must be careful,' said a third; 'these young people think too much.' 'A great deal too much,' said the first, 'once you begin to think for yourself, what's to stop you?'

From the time of his first sermon Seaward Lackland looked upon his dedication to God as not only complete, but, in a sense, accepted. He had offered himself as an interpreter of the will of God to men, and power was put into his hand. Now, he said to himself, if I should prove a backslider, that would be a calamity for God also. The thought of his sins, which he believed God to have pardoned, came back to him again and again; he saw them still existing, like atoms which refused to go out into nothingness; even if pardoned, not literally extinct. What if his soul were one day to reinherit them, to slip back into their midst, having let go of the hand of God, which needed at all times to hold him up out of that deadly gulf? And now that he, who needed help so much, had taken it upon him to try to help others, could he be sure that he was rightly helping them? Could he, in all obedience, be sure that he was interpreting the divine will aright?'

He had never found help in any book but the Bible. Once or twice he had borrowed a commentary from the minister at St. Ives, but he could not read these dry and barren discourses, which seemed to tell you so many unnecessary things, but never the things that you wanted to know. He put them aside, and the conviction came to him that with prayer and thought everything would explain itself to him. Did not the Holy Ghost still descend into men's minds, illuminating that patient darkness? He waited more and more expectantly on that divine light, and it seemed to come to him with a more punctual answer. At night, on the water, while the other men lay across the seats, smoking their pipes in silence, he would withdraw into his own mind until visible things no longer existed, and he was alone in a darkness which began to glow with soft light. Only then did he seem to see quite clearly, and what he saw was not always what he had reasoned out for himself; but it was a solution, and it came irresistibly.

Once, when he had fallen asleep, he dreamed a dream from which he awoke with a cry of terror. In his dream he had seen an evil spirit (it had the appearance of a man, but he knew it to be an evil spirit because of the infinitely evil joy which shone through the melancholy of its eyes), and he was sitting talking with the evil spirit on the edge of a tall cliff above the sea; and it said to him: Do you know that Seaward Lackland is damned? and he said No, and it said: He is damned because he has sinned the sin against the Holy Ghost; and the evil joy began to grow and grow in its eyes, and it was watching him as if to discover whether he knew that he himself was Seaward Lackland, and he tried to say No again, more loudly, and as he drew back, the cliff began to crumble away, but very slowly, so that a hundred years might have passed while he felt himself slipping down into the gulf of the sea; and his own cry awakened him.

He knew that he had been dreaming, but the dream might have been a message. He knew the text in the Bible, and he had often wondered what it meant. Had not Jesus said: 'All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men'? It was the most terrible saying in the Bible. What was the sin which even God could not forgive? He remembered that reiteration in Matthew: 'And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come.' Might it not be possible for a man to sin that sin in ignorance? Would his ignorance avail him, if he had actually sinned it? These thoughts troubled him strangely, and he tried to put them away from him.

They came back to him again, and more searchingly. Since his conversion he had been as much troubled by the thought of his past sins as he had been before that change occurred. They were put away; yes, but was it not a kind of putting off the payment of a debt which might be still accumulating? And now, if there was one sin which could never be atoned for, and if he had committed that one sin? It was possible, and the thought filled him with horror.

One July night, when the boats were away in the North Sea, he set himself to think the whole matter out; he would get at the truth, and not endure this doubt and trouble any longer. He was sitting in the stern of the boat, the other men were talking in low voices, but he was used not to hear them. He put his elbows on his knees, and bowed his head over till his hands met above it. He shut his eyes and stared hard into the darkness under his eyelids. The boat rocked gently: he wanted to keep quite still, so that he might think, and he put his feet against the sides of the boat, steadying himself.

As he sat there, annihilating thought that he might think the more deeply, it seemed to him after a time as if all his past life came back to him under a new aspect, as something which had been wrong from the beginning. Had he not, as a child, been angry, greedy, loving only his own pleasure, ungrateful to those who had refused him any of his desires for his own good? Had he not been heedless and self-willed as a young man, had he not even made a boast of his own righteousness after he had found Christ? Was there a day since he had come to a knowledge of good and evil when he had not sinned at least in thought? He imagined God adding up all those sins, from the animal sins of childhood to the sins of the mature mind. 'The Lamb's book of life': he remembered the words, and they became terrible to him, for he saw all the pages in which his account was written. For him it would be the book of eternal death.

He lifted his head and looked up. God was up there, beyond that roof which was his pavement. He was afraid of the great loneliness which lay between him and God.

He looked around. The drift-net lay out for a mile along the water, its brown corks heaving gently, at regular intervals. Other boats lay alongside, with their nets adrift; some of the boats were silent, the men all asleep; from others he heard voices, a sudden laugh, and then silence. The water was all about him, and the water was friendly, a great breathing thing, that had him in its arms. He only felt at home when he was on the water, because the water was so living, and the land lay like a dead thing, always the same, but for the change of its coverings. There was in the Bible one of those hard sayings: that in heaven 'there shall be no more sea.' It was too difficult for him to understand.

The sea comforted him a little, but he said to himself: 'I do not want to be dandled to sleep like a child; I want to see the truth.' Had he, or had he not, among the numberless sins, which he had seen God adding up in his book, committed the one sin which should never be pardoned? He did not know what that sin was, but, he argued, my ignorance makes no difference. If I pick toad-stools for mushrooms, and eat them, I shall pay the penalty, just the same as if I had eaten them on purpose. The Bible, it was true, did not tell you, as far as he could discover; but there must be people who knew. There was the minister, who had a reference Bible, and knew Hebrew. He would certainly know.

'When we get back to St. Ives,' said Lackland to himself, 'I will go and see Mr. Curnock; meanwhile the less I think about this the better.' But there was one thought that he could not put out of his mind. Suppose he had not sinned the unpardonable sin, had he not sinned so often, and so deeply, that God ought not to pardon him, if he were really a just judge, and not swayed, as men are, by a pity which is only one form of partiality? He had always conceived sternly of God; the Jehovah of the Old Testament was always before him, a mighty avenger, a God of battles and judgments, inexorably just. If God was also love, God might forgive him; he would want to forgive him; but would it be right to accept mercy, if that mercy lowered his creator in his own eyes? The thought stung him, raced through him like poison; he could not escape from it. His old sense of honour towards God came back on him with redoubled force. If God were just, God would not forgive him. Did he not love God so much that he would suffer eternal misery, gladly, in order that God might be just?

When the boats went home with their fish, Lackland had only one thought: to go and see Mr. Curnock at St. Ives. He walked in from Carbis that evening, and found the minister alone in his study. Mr. Curnock respected him; he had gone steadily on, year after year, preaching whenever he was wanted, and though one or two people had complained that his sermons were not strictly orthodox, most of the people spoke well of him; many said that he had helped them. On that night he was very serious, and he seemed to be hesitating to say all that he had to say. At last he admitted that it was the text in the Bible which was troubling him.

Mr. Curnock went up to his shelves and looked along them. 'I know,' he said, 'that many people have been needlessly disturbed about that saying. And, as the Bible does not tell us, we cannot be quite certain what that sin is. But if I can find one or two passages that recur to me, in some of the people who have written about the Gospels, I think they will throw some light on the matter.' He took down a big black book, and turned over the pages. 'Here, for instance: "Not a particular *act* of sin but a *state* of wilful, determined opposition to the Holy Spirit, is meant." That is very much what I should imagine to be the truth. But it is a little vague, perhaps?'

'I don't thoroughly see it,' said Lackland. 'The Bible says "blasphemy against the Holy Ghost."'

'Well now,' said the minister, taking down another book, 'here is a translation from a Spaniard of the sixteenth century, who has been called "a Quaker before his time." He puts things quaintly, but I like him better than the formal people. Let me see: "Whence, considering that . . ." No, that doesn't concern us; here it is: "do I come to understand that a man then sins against the Holy Spirit, when, with mental malignity he persuades men that the works of the Holy Spirit are the works of the devil, he being soul-convinced of the contrary." Is that clear?'

'That's clearer,' said Lackland.

'He goes on, on the next page,' said Mr. Curnock, '"And I understand that sin against the Holy Ghost that worked in Christ was inexcusable, for it could not spring save from the most depraved minds, obstinate in depravity."' Mr. Curnock shut the book, and put it back in its place. 'Now, do you see,' he said, sitting down by the table, 'this awful sin, such as it is, could not be sinned unconsciously; its very essence is that it is a deliberate rejection of what we know to be truth. I might almost say that to sin it, a man must make up his mind that he will do so.'

'I think I see,' said Lackland, staring before him; 'and I was wrong there, for certain: I never committed that sin. But, all the same, I don't feel quite clear yet.'

'Why is that?' said the minister.

'Have you never thought, sir,' said Lackland, 'that the only return we can make to God for his love to us, is to love him more than we love ourselves?'

'But certainly,' said Mr. Curnock.

'Well,' said Lackland, 'do you see it might be that a good Christian would think most of saving his own soul.'

'That is his duty,' said Mr. Curnock.

'But are they both true?' said Lackland.

'Both things you have said are perfectly true,' said Mr. Curnock; 'only, I see no contradiction between them.'

'Thank you, sir,' said Lackland, getting to his feet; 'I'll go and think it all over; I'm not very ready at thinking, I have to set my mind to things slowly; and you've given me a good lot to think over. Good-night, Mr. Curnock.'

'And now, my dear Lackland,' said the minister, as he opened the door of the house, 'above all, don't worry over a text which none of us are very sure about. Be certain of one thing, that God's mercy is infinite, and that he'll bring you through.'

Lackland walked slowly away from the door, along the terrace above the sea, and then more rapidly, as he came out on the rough path along the cliff. The wind blew sharply against him; the moon glittered in the sky, among a multitude of glittering stars; and he heard the sea screaming and tearing at the pebbles, as he sat down on the edge of the cliff, just before getting to Carbis Bay, and looked along the uneasy water, which quivered all over with little waves, hunching themselves up, one after another, and leaping forward, all in a white froth, as they struck upon the beach. 'They are like the lives of men,' thought Lackland; 'all that effort, a struggling onward, a getting to the journey's end: see, that wave is making for just that old tin can, and it has hit it, and the can rolls over and remains, and the wave is gone.' He drew his breath in sharply, drawing up the salt smell of the sea into his nostrils, and sat there for a long time thinking.

No, he had not committed the sin against the Holy Ghost: God could still pardon him. But was it right, was it just, that God should pardon him? One after another of the hard sayings of the Old Testament came into his mind: it was clearly impossible to fulfil every one of those obligations; he could but strive towards them, and fail, and fall back on the mercy of God. At that thought something rose up in him like a pride on behalf of God, and he said to himself: 'I will never ask God to stoop in order that I may rise.' As he said the words he looked round him; the aspect of the place, which he had known all his life, seemed to change, to become dim, to become mysteriously distinct, and he saw that he was sitting where he had sat with the evil spirit in his dream. He got up hastily and went indoors.

Night after night Seaward Lackland went out with the fishing-boats; he did his share of the work just as usual, took his share of the profits, slept by day, and sat awake by night; and, to all about him, he was the same man as before. But an ecstasy was growing up within him which kept his own ears shut to everything but one interior voice; he was meditating a great sacrifice; and a great happiness began to inhabit his soul. 'If God so loved the world,' he repeated, as he had repeated it on the night of his conversion, 'that he gave his only begotten Son . . .' He brooded over the words, wondering if a mere man could imitate that supreme surrender. He was only a poor fisherman; the disciples had been that, and Jesus had called them to leave their fathers and their nets and follow him. Both his father and mother were dead; no one in the world depended on him; he was free to give up the world, if he chose, for God. The thought intoxicated him; he saw nothing but the thought, like a light beckoning to him in the darkness: perhaps calling him to destruction. The pride of a vast magnanimity thrilled through him: he would sin the one sin that God could not pardon, in order that God should deal with him according to his justice, and not according to his mercy. He would, as he had dreamed when a child, prefer God's honour to his own; he would give up heaven in order that God might be worthy of his own idea of him. I will sin, he said to himself, the sin against the Holy Ghost, and I will do it for the love of God.

When he had made up his mind, and was full of an exultant inner peace because of it, he still waited and pondered, not knowing quite how he would do the thing he had decided to do. It must be done publicly, and he must suffer for it here, as he was to suffer for it hereafter. It must be done in Carbis Chapel, when his turn came to preach there.

It was some time before his turn came, and he waited with a feverish impatience. He tried to think out what he should say, but he could not imagine anything that seemed to him sufficiently 'obstinate in depravity.' He remembered the phrase, 'when, with mental malignity, he persuades men that the works of the Holy Spirit are the works of the devil'; and he tried to work out an argument, at which he shuddered, which would seem to show Jesus as one working miracles with the help of Satan. At first he could not put two words together, but gradually the task became easier; strange arguments came into his head, which seemed almost plausible to himself; he wondered if it was actually the devil, for his own ends, helping him. He did not write down a word, though he was accustomed to write every word of his sermons; every word, as he thought it, stamped itself in his mind, like a seal pressed into burning wax.

The night before the Sunday on which he was to preach his last sermon, he lay in bed trying to sleep, but unable to close his eyes on the darkness that seemed to palpitate about him. He got out of bed, threw open the window, and leaned out. The night was quite black, he could see nothing, but he could hear the waves splashing upon the sand down below in the bay. A chill wind bit at his face, and made his body shiver. He shut the window, and lay down in bed again, staring for the dawn. He felt cold right through to the heart, and he felt horribly alone. By to-morrow night he would have cut himself adrift; he would be like that seaweed which the sea was tossing upon the sand, and dragging away from the sand. For God's sake he would have cast off God, and he had no other friend. To-morrow he would have none. His resolution never wavered, but he no longer wished the dawn to come quickly; he would have liked, when he saw the first light on the window-panes, to have held back the dawn.

He was to preach in the evening, and in the morning he sat in the chapel and heard the minister from St. Ives telling of the mercy of God. His text was: 'I say unto you that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance.' He spoke of salvation for all; not a word was said about that one exception. Lackland felt a bitter smile twitching at the corners of his lips.

At night he made his own tea as usual, and walked up and down the room, often looking at the clock, until it was time to go across to the chapel. He saw the people passing his window on their way; some of them looked in, saw him, and nodded in a friendly manner. He looked again at the clock; now it was time for him to go, and he went into a corner of the room, knelt down, and prayed to God for strength to deny him. Then he walked rapidly across to the chapel.

The chapel was very full, it seemed to him oppressively hot, and he felt the blood flushing his forehead. Many of the people remembered afterwards that they had noticed something strange in his manner from the moment in which he set foot on the steps of the pulpit. They were quick to recognise the outward signs of a flame lighted within; and they anticipated a fine sermon. His first prayer was very short, but it was like a last confession. Each word seemed to live with a sharp, painful life of its own; the words cried out, and called down heaven for an answer. The text was a verse out of the twenty-fourth chapter of St. Matthew: 'Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not.' It was not the first time he had chosen a strange text. He began slowly, and with an unusual solemnity. It seemed to him that they were not understanding him aright. As he went on, his voice, which had at first been low, grew louder; he spoke as if he were hurrying through some message which had been laid upon him to deliver; yet with the calmness of one who has mastered his own fever. He was speaking the most terrible words they had ever heard, and they were at first too bewildered even to think. As he went on, they began to look at one another, wondering if he were mad or they; one or two women near the door got up quietly and went out; men stirred in their seats; a great shudder went through the whole congregation. Blasphemies such as they had never dreamed of filled their ears, dazed their senses; and Seaward Lackland stood there calmly, like a martyr, one of them said afterwards; the sweat stood out on his forehead, but he spoke in an even voice: was it Seaward Lackland or was it the devil who stood there denying God, denying the Holy Spirit? There were those who looked up at the ceiling above them, thinking that the roof would fall in and bury them with the blasphemer. But as heaven did not stir in its own defence, it was for them to assume the defence of heaven. An old class leader stood up in his pew, near the communion-rail, and turning his back on the preacher, said in a loud voice: 'I entreat you all to listen to this man no longer, but to go instantly home, and pray God Almighty to forgive you for what you have heard this day.' Lackland stood silent, and every one in the chapel got up and went quickly out, the old class-leader the last; and Lackland was left alone in the chapel, standing before the open Bible in the pulpit. He fell on his knees and covered his face with his hands: 'O God, forgive me,' he prayed, 'for what I have done for thee to-day.'

From that day Seaward Lackland was an outcast in the village. The mates with whom he shared the boat and the nets refused to go to sea in his company, lest they should share a judgment reserved for him, and all be drowned together. He accepted his fate without protest, and, as one thing after another slipped out of his hands, made no complaint. When there was nothing else for him to do, he drove a cart which used to carry the fish from the boats to the salting-cellars, and afterwards from the cellars to the railway station, where they were sent in barrels to the nearest port for Genoa and Leghorn. He was too poor now to live in his cottage, and housed with some others as poor as himself, in a half-fallen shanty on the way to Lelant. Even his housemates mocked him, and held themselves more decent folks than he. It was thought that his brain had weakened, for he became more and more eccentric in his ways, and got to talk with himself, for hours together, in a low voice, but with the gestures of one explaining something to an unseen disputant. One day as he was racing up the hill by the side of his cart, urging on the horses, his foot slipped, and he fell under the near wheel, which had crushed into his breast-bone before the horses could be stopped. He was carried back, and laid on his ragged bed; and was just able to ask those about him to fetch the minister from St. Ives. He was not quite dead when the minister came, and he said 'Amen,' simply, to the prayer which the minister offered up for him. Then, as he seemed anxious to say something, the minister stooped down, and, to help him, said: 'Perhaps you want to tell us why you sinned against God . . .' he was going to add, 'and that you repent of it, and hope for salvation,' but the dying man, in a very faint but ecstatic voice, said: 'Because I loved God more than I loved myself'; and so died, with a great joy on his face. But the minister shook his head sorrowfully, not understanding what he meant.

EXTRACTS FROM THE JOURNAL OF HENRY LUXULYAN.

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When Henry Luxulyan died in Venice, a few years ago, he left a written request that all his papers should be sent to me under seal. He was a townsman of mine, and that, I think, had been almost the only link between us, though I had known him from childhood, and we used to meet, more or less accidentally, and at long intervals, all through his life. As a boy he had few friends; he did not seek them; and I was never sure that he looked upon me as in any real sense a friend. It was always vaguely supposed that he was very clever, and as he took part in no boyish games, and did not ride, or swim, or even walk much, but seemed to brood, and linger, and be thinking, it was supposed that he had interests of his own, and would one day be or do something remarkable. He was never communicative about anything, but once or twice in later years, he spoke to me of his historical studies, and I gathered that he was making researches (for a book, I supposed) into the life of Attila: a subject remote and gloomy enough, I thought, to be naturally attractive to him. For some years I lost sight of him altogether, and then, to my surprise, met him at the house of a German Baron and his wife, who were settled in London, where they entertained lavishly. It was the last house at which I had ever expected to meet him; though indeed the Baroness was a woman of considerable learning, and very intelligent and sympathetic. I found that he had become her librarian, and was living in the house. He looked ill and restless. Whenever I dined at the house, he was always there. I noticed that the Baroness treated him more like a friend than a librarian; appealing to him on every occasion as if he had the management of the whole household. I never had much private talk with him, but he seemed glad to see me, and referred sometimes, but never very definitely, to his work, which I encouraged him to persevere with. He seemed almost pathetically alone; but I remembered that he had never cared to be otherwise. The nervous restlessness which I had observed in him was more marked every time that I saw him; and it was with no surprise that I heard he had broken down, and was in Venice, trying to recover. But it was in Venice that he took the fever of which he died.

I never knew why he left that strange request that his papers should be sent to me; nor was there any message among them, or the least indication of what he wanted me to do with them. Most of them were concerned with the life of Attila, but there were not three properly finished chapters; and the mass of fragments, quotations, references, tentative notes, mutually destructive and unresolved conjectures, baffled my utmost endeavours, and remained for me, and I fear must always remain, so much lost labour, like an enigma of which the key is missing. But in the midst of these papers, thrust as if hurriedly into one of the bundles, so that the string had cut into the outer leaves of loose manuscripts, there was a thin book bound in parchment, almost filled with Luxulyan's close, uneasy writing. It was a journal, many times begun and relinquished, ending with a date not many days before his death. Between the pages were two letters, in a woman's handwriting. I burnt the letters without reading them; then I read the journal.

What I print here is printed with but few omissions; only I have changed the names, and not left any allusion, as far as I know, to circumstances which it is likely that any one could easily identify. For the omissions I make myself wholly responsible; as, indeed, for the printing of the journal at all. It seems to me a genuine document; odd, disconcerting, like the man who wrote it; profoundly disconcerting to me, on reading it, as I discovered the real subterranean being whom I had known, during his lifetime, only by a few, scarcely perceptible outlines on the surface. Such as it is, I give it here, reserving till afterwards something more which I shall have to say by way of comment or epilogue.

April 5.—I have been talking with the doctor to-day, and he tells me that my nerves are seriously out of order. There, of course, he is quite right, and he tells me nothing I did not know already. Only, why tell me? That is just what it does me no good to think about. If I am to keep in even so shaky an equilibrium as this, which at least might be worse, it is essential for me to forget there is any danger. What folly, to be a doctor and honest!

For my part, I was quite frank with him. I told him it was terrible, to be alone and to think about death every day of one's life. He put out a soothing hand professionally, and began to say something about 'with care' and 'I see no reason why,' and so forth; 'no reason why, with care, you should not live, well——' 'How long,' I interrupted him, as he hesitated. 'Thirty years, forty years,' he said confidently, 'why not? I tell you there is no reason why you should not die an old man.' And he thought he was comforting me! I only said, 'It is horrible.' 'In heaven's name,' he said, with real amazement, 'what is horrible?' I told him: this dwindling away, this continual losing of all the forces that hold one to life, this inevitable encroachment of the other thing, the darkness; and the uncertainty of it all, except the ending. 'Come now,' he said, as if he were arguing with a child, 'be reasonable; you don't expect to live for ever?' 'That is just it,' I said; and then I put it to him: 'don't you find it horrible to think of?' 'I never think of it,' he said. 'I have to see to it every day. One accustoms oneself to the things one sees every day. You brood over it because it is hidden away from you.'

He said that as if he was saying something fine, courageous, even intelligent.

I shivered as he spoke so lightly of seeing people die every day, and I said, 'You think nothing of it!' 'To me,' he said, more seriously, 'it is the one quite natural thing in the world. One is tired, one lies down, one sleeps. And even if one isn't conscious of being tired, there is nothing so good as sleep.' It struck me that he was quoting from Marcus Aurelius, in a sort of roundabout way, and I let him go on talking; but when he looked at me and said: 'I have never met any one before who worried over the thought that he would have to die when he was seventy, eighty, ninety: how do you know you won't live to be ninety?' the simplicity of the man struck me as being laughable; a child could have reasoned better, and I said: 'If I live to be ninety I shall never have passed a day without thinking about death, and I know that I am logically right in never losing sight of the only thing in the world which is of infinite importance. You call it morbid, But what if only I am wide awake, after all, and you others are walking straight into a pit with your eyes shut?' It was then that he repeated that my nerves were seriously out of order. He told me that I must find distraction. In other words, I must shut my eyes from time to time. Well, there is no doubt about it. That is what I must try to do. But how?

April 6.—I suppose it is only because I am nervous, and because the doctor told me I must not live so much by myself, but I am beginning to think again about Clare, and I had not thought of her for a long time. When one has lived with a woman, in the same house with her, every day and every night for three years: think, there are one thousand and ninety-five days in three years! well, something remains, in the very look and touch of the furniture, in the treacherous blank of the mirrors, which forget nothing, and hide so much, something that will never wholly go; and I must not expect to release my senses, as I have released my mind and my will, from the power of that woman.

Only, the less I think about her the better; and there is no danger of my wanting her back again. That would be singularly inconvenient, if, as I can but suppose, she is perfectly happy with that ordinary person whom she had the curious taste to prefer to me. One must guard against being ridiculous, even when one is alone with oneself, and I am content to seem no hero to this serviceable valet, my journal; but it is partly the incapacity of good taste in them that makes women so intolerable. There are men of whom I have said to myself: Now, if Clare fell in love with this man, or that man, it would seem to me so natural, so legitimate; I could almost despise her for not submitting to a fascination which is insensative not to feel. But a poseur, a fop, a cad; one of those men whom every man sees through at the first hand-shake; a sleek flatterer, whose compliments are vulgarities; the shopman air of 'inquire within upon everything'; yes, that is the man who takes his choice of women. Is vulgarity a curable thing? and will the vulgarity of women ever be cultured out of them?

I once tried to believe that there are women and women; but I have never found that the 'and' meant anything essential.

April 7.—I dined out at night, with my Jew friends, the Kahns, whom I have not cared to see for so long; and the distraction has done me good. They were charming, sympathetic, not obtrusively anxious about me; they welcomed me as if I were really a friend; and there were some pleasant people at the dinner-table. Only, I do not understand how they could ask to dinner a certain Baroness von Eckenstein who was there. One should preserve a certain decency in intercourse; there are things one should be spared! I sat opposite to her, and she talked to me a good deal across the table; she seemed intelligent; she might be all that is admirable. Her figure was firm, ample, almost majestic, and the face had once been not less finely designed, but over the whole left side, from the forehead to the neck, there was a great white scar, shapeless, horribly white, and scored as with deep cuts, which had formed cicatrices of a yet more ghastly white. The bloodless and livid skin, ploughed and wrinkled with these raised cicatrices, was drawn tightly over the cheek-bone. The eyelid, strangely misshapen, was alone the natural colour of flesh, but this eyelid looked as if it were artifically attached to the underpart of the eyebrow, and on the forehead above the eye there was a white scar, as if the flesh had been cut away to form the eyelid. I dared not look at her, and yet, in spite of myself, my eyes kept seeking her face. A death's head would be a more agreeable companion at table. They tell me she is newly come to London, very rich, very hospitable; Mrs. Kahn, with her intolerable indulgence, means to make a friend of her; if I go there again I am sure to meet her, and only the thought of that disgrace of nature makes me shiver. Must I cut myself off again from just what had promised to be a real distraction? I will stay at home, work, not think, bury myself in my books.

April 8.—I realise, on thinking it over in a perfectly calm mood, without any sort of nervous excitement, that I have always been afraid of women; and that is one reason, the chief perhaps, why I have always been so lonely, both when Clare was with me, and before and after it. Just as I cannot get out of my head that there is some concealed conspiracy against me, in earthly things, so there seems to be, in the other sex, a kind of hidden anger or treachery, which makes me uneasy. I was never really happy when a woman sat on the other side of the table, at the other corner of the fireplace. Vigny was right:

> 'Toujours ce compagnon dont le cœur n'est pas sûr.'

I will quote no more: the verse becomes Biblical; and indeed it is of Samson and Delilah. Just what attracts me in a woman revolts me: the 'love strong as death,' which is no more than 'la candeur de l'antique animal,' raised to the power of self-expression. It bewilders, distracts yes, terrifies me. That women are better and worse than we think them, I am certain; and no doubt nature was wise in setting us on our knees before the enigma. To be so mysterious and so contemptible! Merely for us to think that, shuts us away from them, our possible friends, as by a great wall, outside which there can be only enemies. We capitulate, perhaps, but it is the enemy who has conquered.

April 9.—I have been working hard, going nowhere, and I suppose staying indoors too much. I begin to be restless again. The Kahns have written asking me to dine with them on Sunday: will that woman be there? Hans Greger is coming with his old music, and I should like to hear the viols and harpsichord again. I think I must go.

Meanwhile some rumours of war which I read on the newspaper placards have set me puzzling over one of my favourite enigmas. Is it not incredible that there should be people in the world who will kill one another, and even themselves, for any one of a multitude of foolish reasons? As if life was not short enough at the longest, and one's bodily pains troublesome enough without even the added risk of accidents; and yet we must do our best to aid the enemy of us all; we must make ourselves lieutenants of death; and for what? The thing begins in our fantasies of honour, precedence, patriotism, or by whatever name, big or small, we choose to christen the tiny germ of unreason. War reduces to an absurdity, with its pompous mortal emphasis, the whole argument. I have been thinking out a theory of this disease of humanity, to which scientific people should have given a name. It might be studied, in cellars, as they study bacilli.

April 10.—To-day has been one of those days in which London becomes intolerable. The dust-carts in the street, the reek of chop-houses, the unwashed bodies in frowsy clothes, stink on the air, and the air is too heavy to drain off this odious foulness, and one breathes it, and seems to sicken. I am sure some loathsome gas is rising up out of the canal under my windows; my head turns if I lean out and look over; and now it is between two lights, almost too dark to see by daylight and not dark enough to draw the curtains and turn on the electric light. It is the time of day that I hate most; it is the only time of the day when I actively want to be doing something, and when I am acutely miserable because I have nothing to do.

The last half-hour, since I wrote these words, has been as miserable a half-hour as I remember spending in my life. And yet there is nothing to account for it, except this absurd sensitiveness which is growing upon me. Why is it that one clings to life when it bores one in this manner? I am not sure that I have ever felt what people call the joy of living: life has always seemed to me a more or less ridiculous compromise; and yet there is nothing I dread so much as any sort of truth, the truth which might put an end, once and for all, to this compromise. Was there ever any one so illogical? I hate life, and yet I want to go on living for ever. Sometimes, coming back at night, after a concert in which some great music has struck one into a profound seriousness, a strange and terrifying sensation takes hold of me as the cab turns suddenly, out of a tangle of streets, into a broad road between trees and houses: one enters into it as into a long dimly lighted alley, and at the end of the road is the sky, with one star hung like a lantern upon the darkness; and it seems as if the sky is at the end of the road, that if one drove right on one would plunge over the edge of the world. All that is solid on the earth seems to melt about one; it is as if one's eyes had been suddenly opened, and one saw for the first time. And the great dread comes over me: the dread of what may be on the other side of reality. And it seems as if all the years of the longest life, measured out into days and hours, would not be long enough to hold me back from the horror of that plunge.

April 11.—She deceived me: all women deceive. I have no right to condemn her any more than I condemn my doctor for deceiving me when I am ill. He tells me: You will be better to-morrow; knowing that the only way to make me better is to make me think I am going to be so. It would be worse for us if women did not deceive us.

She was vain, selfish, sensual: should I have cared for her if she had not been all three? To almost everybody she seemed gentle and modest: was it really that I knew her better, or did everybody else know something about her which I had never discovered? That is the odd thing which I am beginning to wonder. She lived with me for three years, and then left me. Whose fault was it that she left me after three years? In this wholly unusual state of humility in which I find myself at present, I cannot say that the fault was not partly mine, and partly that she was a woman. What a thing it is to be a woman, and how perplexing are even their virtues! They are not made, as we are, all of a piece; they are not made to be consistent; they think so little of what we think so much of; even sex is a light, simple, and natural thing to them, to which they attach none of our morbid valuations. It is for all this that, when I am not in this particular mood, I hate and fear them; but to-day it all seems so natural, and women themselves seem so pardonable. Think of the daily habits of their life: how many times a day they dress and undress themselves, and all it means. With each new gown a woman puts on a new self, made to match it. All day long they are playing the comedian, while we do but sit in the stalls, listen, watch and applaud. At least the play is for our entertainment; we pay them to act it: let us be indulgent if the acting is not always to our taste.

April 13.—I have just come from the Kahns'. Certainly there is no music like this old, tinkling, unwearied music of Greger's for giving one a sort of phantom or ghostly peace, as if the present faded into the distance, and life became a memory, half sad and half happy, and above all not too poignant. I can no longer allow myself to hear Wagner, much less Tschaikowsky: music made to make people suffer.

Of course the Baroness was there. She sat by me at dinner, but on my left, and I could only see the unspoilt half of her face. Every now and then I thought of the other half, and a kind of sickness came over me. Once I turned to my other neighbour, in the middle of a sentence. But, for the most part, I forgot, and then it seemed to me that I was talking with the most accomplished woman I had ever met. She has travelled, knows many languages, many people; she has the feeling, and, I think, some of the knowledge of an artist; we spoke of music, painting, the art of living; and, oddly enough, she has a passion for just my own subject;

history is her favourite reading, and when I spoke of one of my own hobbies, of Attila, she quoted Jornandes, and a passage, I remembered, that Thierry has not translated: she must have read it in Latin. How has she found time to do all this? To me she does not seem very young, but I suppose she is very little over forty. She spoke of everything with great frankness; only, never of herself. I have hardly spoken to the husband, to whom I have never seen her speak. He is very tall, very dark, very thin, with an air of politeness so excessive that it seems a kind of irony. She has asked me to come and see her; she promises me the use of her library. Can I, I wonder, ever get the better of that repugnance which rises in me when I see the ragged mask, the mended eyelid?

April 14.—I have been filling these pages with rumours and apprehensions, and now, just when I least expected it, something definite has happened, which seems to make them all very trivial and secondary. The Argonaut Building

Society, into which I had put nearly all the little money I had, has failed; there has been swindling; I am ruined. What am I to do? I shall have to earn my living, heaven knows how; I shall have to give up my work, sell my books, find some cheaper rooms. This is the one thing I never thought would happen. I have been afraid of most things but poverty, and now it is poverty which has come upon me. Perhaps something will be saved out of the wreck of this false Argonaut. I must wait until I know for certain that there is nothing.

April 15.—I called on the Baroness von Eckenstein. I did not expect to see such a library. It was made by three generations of savants, and continued by herself. There are folios not in the British Museum; one that I had come to think had never existed. If she will really let me sometimes use her library, I can sell my books cheerfully. She has a remarkable intelligence. But for that scar she would have been singularly handsome. What can have caused it, I wonder? It is like the scar which I once saw on the face of a woman over whom her rival had thrown vitriol. I am far from supposing any such vulgar tragedy in the household of the Eckensteins!

April 16.—No further news yet from the Argonaut. I can only anticipate the worst. Nothing but rain without, and this intolerable suspense in one's mind. I can neither work nor think.

April 17.—To-day the weather has changed, and see how this barometer of my nerves registers the change! I have been walking in Regent's Park, the nearest country, and I feel singularly good, wise, and happy. That uninteresting park, uninteresting in itself, has a gift of refreshment, as one turns into it out of the streets. I find myself leaning against the railing to watch a little dark creature with red legs and a red bill, that swims between the swans, and clambers up on the grass, and runs about there stealthily with a shy grace. There is an island, to which all the water-birds go, and it is grown over with trees and bushes and green weeds, down to the edge of the water, and they go there when they want to be alone, as one goes into a deep wood, out of the streets in which people stare. To-day I was perfectly happy, merely walking about the park. I sat under a tree for half an hour, and it was only when I realised that a queer sound which had come to me at intervals, a mournful and deep cry, which I had heard in a kind of dream, was the crying of the wild beasts, over yonder, inside their bars, that I got up and came away.

I have gone back to my journal at three o'clock in the morning, because I cannot sleep, and one of my old horrors has taken hold of me again. I am writing in order to give myself almost a sense of companionship: this talking to oneself on paper is so different from the loud emptiness of the night, when one is awake, and one's thoughts cry out. I woke up suddenly, and felt the darkness about me, like a horrible oppression. I felt as I have sometimes felt when the train has been carrying me through a long tunnel. All the blood went to my head, as if I were stifling, and I had a need of daylight. I turned on the electric light, but it made no difference; it was no more than the light in the railway-carriage while the darkness is thundering about one's ears, I had the sensation of a world in which the daylight had been blotted out, and men stumbled in a perpetual night, which the lamps did but make visible. I felt that I should not be able to go on breathing unless I thrust the thought out of my mind, and I got up and turned on all the lights and walked to and fro in the rooms, and then came in here to quiet myself in the way I have found so good, by writing down all these fears and scruples of mine, as coldly as I can, as if they belonged to somebody else, in whose pyschology I am interested. Already the uneasiness has almost left me. And yet who knows if I am only wrapping the blanket round my head once more, in order that I may run through fire and not see it?

April 18.—I have had one of my old headaches to-day, partly because I slept so little last night and partly because there has been thunder, at intervals, all day long; and now at night, when it is quite cool again, after the rain which washed off the suffocating heat of the day, the sky still gives a nervous twitch now and again, like a face which has lost control of its muscles. Yesterday it seemed as if Spring had come, but to-day a premature Summer leapt out on the world, in one of those distressing paroxysms of the elements in which I get more than my share of the general discomfort. It is only for the last few hours that I have recognised myself, and already I find it difficult to remember that other self, which lay on the sofa with half-shut eyes and a forehead eaten away by the little sharp teeth of the nerves. How we measure ourselves by time, and time by ourselves! Then, it seemed incredible that I should ever be my usual self again; my focus had been suddenly altered, and nothing was the same. I think we ought to be more grateful for such occasions than we are; for this sort of readjustment is certainly useful. All habits, and not only what we call bad habits, are hurtful; and life is one long habit, which it is good to vary sometimes.

I suppose that my headache is not quite gone yet, and that it is this which makes me write down these obvious reflections. I must stop writing for to-night.

April 20.—I have had a strange, generous, almost incredible letter from the Baroness. She has heard from the Kahns that I have lost all my money, and she offers me the post of librarian; I can live in the house, and I am to have a salary which is much more than I had before the Argonaut went to pieces. I have only to say yes, and I am saved.

Can I accept this charity? It is nothing less. What can I give in return? Nothing. What can have induced her to offer me this immediate kindness? That she is generous I do not doubt; but to this point? I must revise my opinions about women.

There is charity, certainly, and I shall soon be penniless, and not well able to refuse it. She prizes her library; she wishes it to be put in order, catalogued, kept in order, added to; she saw my interest, she knew that I am perfectly capable to do what she wants to have done. Is there anything unnatural after all in what must after all remain her immense kindness?

One thing remains. Can I accustom myself to see her every day, to sit at table with her, to be constantly at her call? At first it will not be easy, and then afterwards, who knows? but that would be the worst of all, I may come to find a sort of perverse pleasure in looking at her, the pleasure which is part horror, and which comes from affronting and half encouraging disgust.

April 28.—I have written nothing in my journal for the last week; too many things have happened, and I have seemed to go through them almost mechanically. I am already in my new quarters; I have my rooms, near the library in which I work, in the vast house at Queen's Gate; and I am already more than half regretting my old flat over Regent's Canal, where I could be alone from morning to night.

There was no serious question of refusing this most fortunate opportunity; I had no choice: it was this or nothing, for if I recover £100 out of the Argonaut, it will be the utmost I have to hope for. The Baroness is a woman of action; she insisted, she arranged everything, and I found myself here without having done more than consent to let things be done for me. Certainly that is a form of arrangement which suits me, and life here seems to go not less smoothly; I have but to accept it, not without a certain satisfaction. The Baron must be enormously rich; there is something almost ostentatious in the display of gold, silver, and silk. Nothing is simple; the cost of these expensive things seems as if ticketed upon them; and there are coronets everywhere. But I, who never seriously thought about money until the little I had melted away, have never realised what an efficacious oil can be distilled out of gold for making all the wheels of life go smoothly. I am treated as one of the family; I profit hardly less than they from all that I care for in the possession of riches.

And yet, there is something here which weighs upon me; a sort of moral atmosphere which renders me uneasy. I see clearly, what I had guessed before, that there is no affection, that there is even a certain degree of alienation, between the Baron and Baroness. Nothing can be more polite, but with a sort of enigmatical politeness, which hides I know not what, than the Baron's manner towards his wife. He is scrupulously, exaggeratedly, polite towards every one; and his excessive ceremony with me puts a certain restraint upon me. I imagine that he detests me, merely from the extreme care with which he tries to convince me of his amiability. The whole man seems to me false; or, it may be, he has acted a part so long that the part has fastened itself upon him. His eyes and his mouth seem never to say the same thing; both guard, as at two doorways, the thoughts which are at work in his brain.

The attitude of the Baroness towards her husband has a different inflexion of meaning; it is frigidly polite, but with a more evident shade of aversion. If he puts forward an opinion, she contradicts it; while he assents, outwardly, to all her opinions, but with an ironical air which seems itself a negation. He is a great sportsman, and I have never seen him with a book in his hands; she cares passionately for reading, and hates every form of sport. But it is not merely a difference of temperament; there is, I am convinced, something very definite which sets a barrier between them. What is it? Here is a problem, for once outside the eternal, wearing, for the most part inevitable, problem of myself, which I shall do well to study. How gladly I welcome anything which can distract me from my own sensations, in which I have so long lived isolated, alone with myself!

May 5.—The library is even finer than I thought. The labour of cataloguing it will be an amusement. For the present I do none of my own work; I am absorbed in this new occupation. How strange, how fortunate, to be at the same time taken outside myself in my thoughts, and away from what becomes monotonous in my studies! I have found, it would seem, precisely the distraction which the doctor ordered me. Only, the old solitary life seems a thing to regret, now I have left it behind me; and ought I not to regret the self which I left with it?

It is certain that I shall never accustom myself to look at the Baroness without repugnance. From my childhood I have never been able to endure the sight of any human disfigurement. I used to faint at the sight of blood, and I have always looked away when I have seen people crowding about a man or a horse fallen in the street. It is not pity, it is a very sensitive egoism: before an accident I imagine the thing happening to me, or I imagine myself obliged to touch the wound or the broken limb. I never look at the Baroness without a mental shiver at the thought of what that dead, furrowed, and discoloured skin must be like to the touch.

May 9.—I have got no further in my study of these two enigmatical people, who seem to have not one thought, not one feeling, in common, and yet who seem to live so calmly side by side, in this vast house where they need never meet except at meals, or when the presence of strangers isolates them. I am wholly unable to talk with the Baron, who ignores me with the most punctilious deference. He never enters the library, and, in the drawing-room, is never without a newspaper, of which he rarely turns the pages. With the Baroness I can always talk; I can even, what is rare with me, listen. For a woman, her ideas are surprisingly well informed: quotations, of course, but arranged with a personal sense of decoration. She can discuss general questions broadly, with a rare frankness, a kind of eager sincerity. What does the Baron think, I wonder, behind that screen of the newspaper, if, as he sits motionless, he is listening, as I cannot but believe, to every word that is said? I often look at the newspaper, hoping to see it at least quiver, if not drop to the floor, and the man leap out of his ambush. The Baroness interests me a little more every day, and this interest is oddly balanced by my equal difficulty in looking or in not looking at her. When she is talking with me she invariably arranges herself so as to be on my left; often she leans her head on her left hand, as if to shield even what remains unseen. How horribly she must suffer from this living mask, under which she is condemned to exist! How long, I wonder, has she worn it, and shall I ever know the cause? Is she always conscious of its presence, of the eyes that seek to avoid it, and return, despite themselves, stealthily? I can conceive no more exquisite torture. Or yes, there is one. Suppose this woman, in whom I can distinguish a quite unusual force and energy of emotion, were to fall in love again: she is at the age of lasting passions, and what could be more natural in her? That would be a tragedy which I hardly like to think of; the more so, as I can easily conceive how powerful must have been her attraction before the time of this accident. There is something almost magnetic in her nature, and I can see that the Kahns, for instance, are attracted by her to the point of hardly seeing her as she is, of forgetting to look at her with their own eyes.

May 15.—The dinner-parties which women in society condemn themselves to the task of giving become less and less intelligible to me as I see them from so close a point of view. How little pleasure they seem to give to any except very young or very old people! It is a kind of slavery: penal servitude with hard labour. I am sure neither of the Eckensteins gets the slightest personal pleasure out of these big dinners which they are so constantly giving. I am equally sure that the people who accept their invitations would generally rather not come; that they accept them largely because it is difficult to write and say I will not come; partly out of a vague hope, almost invariably deceived, that they will meet some delightful new person; partly out of the mere social necessity of killing time. I have never seen so much before of a London season, and I shall be glad when it is over.

August 10.—They have taken a house for the summer down here in this remote part of my own county, Cornwall; there is fishing for the Baron, and golf not far off, and boating, I suppose. The heat in London was becoming intolerable; my old headaches began to come back; and I was only too glad to say yes when the Baroness asked me, almost hesitatingly, if I would come with them. Here I have nothing to do; we walk on the cliffs, drive across Cornwall and back again, sit under the trees on this lawn, from which one can hear the sea, not quite knowing if it is the sound of the sea or of the trees. In short, one is idle, and in the open air. I am well again already; only, inexpressibly lazy.

The Baroness and I are thrown together so much, by the mere loneliness of the place, and the determined absence of the Baron, that we are getting to know one another better. In driving and walking she invariably keeps on my left; for which I am grateful to her. She is a good walker, and cares for the sea, I think, as much as I do.

Is it chiefly the influence of the place, the weather, the homeliness and familiarity of the old manor-house, where we sit and walk in the garden, as in a grassy opening in the midst of a wood? That, and the stillness and unconfined space on the cliffs, where one can sit silent for so long, until only intimate words come; all that, I am sure, has had its influence on both of us, certainly on me. The Baroness has begun to question me about myself, and I, who hate confidences, find myself telling her what I have told no one.

I have told her about Clare, about my thoughts, my ideas, my sensations, all that I have up to now only confessed to my journal. How is it that she draws my secrets out of me, and how is it that I feel a pleasure in telling them to her?

August 15.—To-day we drove to the Lizard, and sat for an hour on that high peak of rocks which goes down into the sea at this last southerly edge of England. The sea was steel-blue, almost motionless except where it made a little circle of foam around each rock, and it seemed to stretch endlessly, as if it flowed over all the rest of the world. Ships were going by, with sails and black smoke, with a great haste to be somewhere. We sat silent for a time, and then she began to tell me about herself; little confidences of no moment, only they seemed to be hesitating on the verge of some fuller confidence. At first I thought she was going to tell me all; but the wind began to get chill, and the sun faded out behind clouds, and her mood changed, and she got up, and we went back to the carriage.

August 20.—At last I know the whole story, or as much of it as I am likely to know. Last night, after dinner, we were sitting alone in the garden, in a corner where the trees darken the grass; she sat with her hand half covering her face, in that attitude which is habitual with her, though only the right side of her face was visible, and the long silence became more and more intimate until at last she spoke. She began to tell me of herself, and first of her chilhood among the Bohemian woods, her escapes from the army of governesses and tutors, her dreams in the depths of the forest, the 'Buch der Lieder' read by moonlight and thrust under the pillow as she fell asleep: in short, a very pretty, very German, sentimental education. Then the young English tutor, with his tragic beauty, his Byronic sighs; she pities, admires, falls in love with him; their meetings, declarations; they plot a romantic elopement, but the coachman turns traitor; the Byronic gentleman is dismissed, and the girl sent to her cousins in Vienna, where she begins to see the world, and to dream more worldly dreams. The Baron presents himself, with his title, his money, his serious reputation; the parents implore her to accept him, and she accepts him, in order that she may accomplish a social duty. By this time she has made innumerable friends, Vienna is the world to her, she cannot exist without people, excitement, admiration; and when the Baron, who hunts during half the year, takes her away to his castle, and leaves her there, from morning to night, day after day for months together, she lives the life of a prisoner, alone with her books and her more and more discontented thoughts. Time passes, and the husband whom she has never loved becomes a polite stranger, then an unwelcome guest. He sees indifference passing into aversion, and makes no attempt to arrest the course of things. It is enough if she is submissive, and his pride does not so much as dream of a revolt.

Meanwhile there are neighbours, hunting friends who come to the castle, and among them is a young Frenchman. She told me simply, quietly, as if she were telling me the story of some one else, how this man had gradually attracted her, how delicately and perseveringly he had made love to her, and how his presence rendered the tedium of her life less insupportable. She loved him, she believed that he loved her, and a new happiness came into her life. One day the husband, who had appeared to suspect nothing, came back unexpectedly. She had been playing the piano, her lover was seated just behind her, and as she rose from the piano and flung herself passionately into his arms, she saw, over his shoulder, the reflection of her husband's face in the mirror. He had opened the door while she was playing, and stood motionless, holding the door half open, with his eyes fixed upon them. Before she could make a movement the door had closed silently. It did not open again. The lover left the castle hastily, meeting no one on the way. Hours passed, and she sat watching the door, quiet with terror. At last she could bear it no longer, and she went straight to her husband's apartments. The painters had been at work, and their tools, paints, brushes, and bottles were still lying about. Her husband was seated at his writing-table. As she entered the room he put down the pen, turned to her calmly and said: 'I am writing to ask Xavier to dinner, but you will have to fix the date. I have a little surprise for him.' He rose, took three steps towards her, with a look of inexpressibly sarcastic malignity, and, stooping rapidly, picked up a bottle from the floor, and flung the contents in her face. She shrieked in agony as the vitrol burnt into her like liquid fire, and she rolled over at his feet, shrieking.

When, after months of suffering, the bandages were at last taken off, and she could resume her place at the table, she found, on coming downstairs to dinner, one guest awaiting her with her husband. It was her lover. She had not seen him, no word from him had reached her, since the accident. During dinner the Baron was cheerful, almost gay; he related amusing stories, turning from one to the other with an air of cordiality, and affecting not to notice that neither spoke more than a few words. Soon after dinner, the guest excused himself. A few days afterwards it was reported that he had left the neighbourhood.

August 21.—I lay awake last night for several hours, unable to get this horrible story out of my head. I thought these were things that no longer happened, or only in Russia, perhaps; I thought we were at least so far civilised. It is the meanness of the revenge that horrifies me most in its atrocity. And that these two people, after that moment's revelation of the one to the other, should have gone on living together, under the same roof: it is incredible. There, I suppose, is civilisation, the hypocrisy of our conventions, which, if they cannot suppress the brute in the human animal, are prompt to cloak the thing once done, to pretend that it never was done, never could have been done.

Now, when I sit at table between that man and woman, I scarcely know whether I am judge, witness, or accuser. What had been instinctive in my distrust of the man has become a mental revulsion not less intense than the physical revulsion which I must always feel towards the woman. Only, towards her, I have a new feeling, a kind of sympathetic confidence, mingled with pity; and it pleases me that she has confidence in me. It would give me pleasure if I could aid her, in some way that I cannot even conjecture, to avenge herself on that diabolical tyrant, her husband.

September 25.—As I look back over these pages it seems to me that I have lost the habit of writing down my thoughts about general questions, which my once wholly personal preoccupations brought constantly before me. How a journal changes with one's life, if it is really, as mine is, the confidant of one's moods, the secret witness of one's growth or decay! I suppose it is that, as I accustom myself to look for my interest outside the circle of my own brain, I become less personal, less sick with myself. My old terrors, my old preoccupations, have loosened their hold on me, I think; my brain is getting more quiescent, more conventional. If only the nerves do not break out again, as I find it so easy to realise their doing; if I can avoid excitement, that is, keep myself as I am now, an interested spectator of other people's lives, with no too eager interests of my own: that will at last set me wholly to rights. And, certainly, this divine Cornish air, half salt, half honey, will have done something for me, in helping to cure me of a too narrow, London philosophy.

August 3.—It is almost exactly a year since I have written anything in my journal, which I find where I left it, forgotten in the corner of a drawer in the Cornish manor-house, to which we have gone back again this summer. I am glad to be here again, but, all the same, it is not quite as it was last year. The Baroness and I are better friends than ever. I am more accustomed to her, she is kindness itself. Ah yes, that is it. Her kindness begins to become fatiguing; I would prefer a little liberty. Why is it that good people forge chains with their kindness, adding link to link with the best intentions in the world, until one is tripped up and weighed down and held by the fetters of innumerable favours? To break so much as a link is held to be ingratitude. But one's liberty, then, is there anything comparable in the price one pays, and in the utmost one can receive in place of it?

Is it that a woman is unable to conceive of the fatigue of kindness? How incomprehensible to them must be that marvellous sentence in 'Adolphe': 'Je me reposais, pour ainsi dire, dans l'indifférence des autres, de la fatigue de son amour.' And, even if it is not love, the heaviest of all burdens when it comes unasked, there is still a fatiguing weight in that affectionate vigilance which is one long appeal for gratitude, in that sleepless solicitude which 'prevents,' in both senses of the word, all one's goings. I am beginning to find this with the Baroness, who would replace Providence for me, but with a more continual intervention.

August 18.—O this intolerable demand on one's gratitude, this assumed right of all the world to receive back favour for favour, to be paid for giving! Must there be a market for kindness, and balances to weigh charity by the pound weight? I am not sure that the conventional estimation of gratitude as one of the main virtues, of gratitude in all circumstances and for all favours received, has not a profoundly bourgeois origin. I have never been able clearly to recognise the necessity, or even the possibility, of gratitude towards any one for whom I have not a feeling of personal affection, quite apart from any exchange of benefits. The conferring of what is called a favour, materially, and the prompt return of a delicate sentiment, gratitude, seems to me a kind of commercialism of the mind, a mere business transaction, in which an honest exchange is not always either possible or needful. The demand for gratitude in return for a gift comes largely from the respect which most people have for money; from the idea that money is the most 'serious' thing in the world, the symbol of a physical necessity, but a thing having no real existence in itself, no real importance to the mind which refuses to realise its existence. Only the miser really possesses it in itself, in any significant way; for the miser is an idealist, the poet of gold. To all others it is a kind of mathematics, and a synonym for being 'respected.' You may say it is necessary, almost as necessary as breathing, and I will not deny it. Only I will deny that any one can be actively grateful for the power of breathing. He cannot conceive of himself without that power.

To conceive of oneself without money, that is to say, without the means of going on living, is at once to conceive of the right, the mere human right, to assistance. And when, instead of money, it is some unasked, necessary or unnecessary, gift which is laid before us, to be taken whether we choose or not, what more have we to do than to take it, silently, without thanks, without complaint, as we would pick up an apple that has dropped to us over an orchard hedge? I say all that to myself, and believe it, and yet some irrational obligation weighs upon me, whenever I think of breaking away from this woman and her affection.

October 25.—Can it be possible, or am I falling into the most absurd of misapprehensions? What has happened, that I should seem to-day to be conscious of what I had not even dreamt of yesterday? Nothing has happened; she, her husband, and I have sat in our usual places at the table and in the garden; not a word different from our usual words has passed between us; and yet . . . Why is it that no man can ever be friends with any woman? It is the woman, usually, who puts the question. And she, I am certain that she never wanted to be anything but my friend. Then she wanted to be my only friend; she wanted to make my mind her possession. I see it step by step, now that I think back. Then what we call nature came in to trouble the balance. She is a healthy, normal woman; she has all the natural affections. Why is it that tenderness in women must always take the fever? For there is no doubt about it, none. Once you have seen a certain look in a woman's eyes, once a certain thrill has come into her fingers, there is no mistaking. I have seen that look in her eyes, I can still feel the thrill of her fingers, as her hand touched mine, and seemed to forget to let go.

October 26.—I awoke this morning in a cold sweat. I had been dreaming of Clare, I heard her footstep coming along the corridor, the door opened, I knew it was she, but she was veiled, and when she called my name her voice sounded far away, as if the veil muffled it; and I put up my hand to lift her veil, and she prayed me not to lift it, but I would not listen to her, and when I saw her face it was Clare, but with the cheek and eyelid of the Baroness. One of us shrieked, and I awoke trembling.

It is still early morning, but I have no mind to sleep again, and perhaps dream. I must try to put these ugly thoughts out of my head, and here is a morning which should help me, if anything in nature could. Is it that some sense, which other people have is lacking in me? I have never found that peace in nature of which I have heard so often, and which, on such a morning as this, when the light begins to glow softly over the world, and the wind comes in salt from the sea, and the leaves rustle as if at an imperceptible caress, should come to me as simple as to trees. There is a physical delight in it, certainly; but it goes no deeper than the skin of my forehead.

I remember, when I first met the Baroness, thinking how cruel, how ironical, it would be, if she were to fall in love again. I remember also, when I first knew her story, wishing that I could help her: yes, here it is written down, last August: 'if I could aid her, in some way that I cannot even conjecture, to avenge herself on that diabolical tyrant, her husband.' I certainly saw no connection between the two things, nor any relation of myself to either of them. And yet, see how both have come together, and how strangely I stand between them, touching both.

The notion seems to me, at present, incredible; and yet, why? Yet more improbable things have happened, and who am I, or who is she, after all, that, in the malice of nature, no such idea should enter into a woman's head?

I wrote here, not so long ago, 'I am more accustomed to her.' Shall I ever be able to say more than that? And it is terrible to be able to say no more than that.

I suppose, if I loved her, I should notice nothing. Is it that pity would come in to take up all the room? But I have never had any gift for pity; and then, all conjecture is idle, for I certainly do not love her.

October 28.—Is it possible that I could have been mistaken, or is she conscious that she has betrayed her secret, and now hides it away again? To-day she has seemed really, not affectedly indifferent. Do I altogether wish that it were so? Have I not got used to being looked after not quite as a stranger, to a kindness on which it has seemed to me that I could always rely? Is there not something I should find myself missing, if it were taken away from me?

October 29.—We are to go back to London in a day or two. It rains every day, and almost all day long. Every one stays indoors, and we seem always to find ourselves in different rooms. After dinner the Baron looks up sometimes from his newspaper; the talk is quite formal, because he joins in it. Can she have shown him some sign of encouragement, or is it he? And is she keeping back something, or am I wrong in all that I have conjectured? Nothing is as it was. I shall be glad when we are back in London.

November 2.—We are back in London. I hardly see her now. For nearly a week she has avoided me, and I am astonished to find myself, I can hardly say piqued, and yet there is a little pique in it too. It is so evident to me that she is playing a part, but the part is well played, and I feel oddly disquieted. I hate change, uncertainty, that kind of uneasiness which women used to cause me, but which I have so long given up feeling. I miss the old freedom of her talk, her confidences to me, her faculty for taking an interest in one's ideas, one's personal sensations. How odd that this should have come to mean so much more to me than I knew! And there is something else that I miss, in her new reserve, now that it comes suddenly up between us as a barrier. I used to wish for just such a barrier. And now it annoys me to find it there. It is only restlessness on my part, I know, but it surprises me to find that I am capable of so near an approach to, after all, some kind of feeling. I thought I had buried all that quite securely, years ago.

November 5.—To-day I have heard news of Clare for the first time during all these years since she went away. And it is not as I fancied; she is not happy, not even well off; she has been seen in poor lodgings at the seaside, and alone. Has the man, the turgid fop and brute, whom I criticised her and all her sex for caring about, left her, then? It looks like it. Could one imagine, on his part, anything else? I knew him so much better than she did! But I am horribly sorry; I do not want to see her again, but I should like, if I could, to help her. I wonder if she will write to me. I shall take it as a compliment if she writes.

November 7.—She has written, and the letter has reached me here, after a little delay. She must think I am not going to write. She wants to see me, and it will perhaps be better for me to see her. She is in London; it would be kinder if I called; and heaven knows there is no danger. Her letter is full of dignity; she knows me and there are no tears in it; the regrets are duly temperate; she does not even ask to be forgiven. 'I am in trouble: you once cared for me: I have not forgotten that you can be kind: will you help me?' That is the substance of her letter. I will write to her to-night, and say that I will come and see her.

1 A.M.—Shall I never understand women? will nothing ever teach me wisdom? I was foolish enough to think that the Baroness would help me, that I could be open with her, as I have been till now. I had no secrets from her in regard to Clare, and she knows how much all that is in the past. I showed her the letter. She read it in silence, with her hand over her eyes. Then, not raising her head, she said, in a voice that seemed her ordinary voice: 'You will go and see her?' 'I think it would be best,' I said. She lifted her head suddenly, clenched the paper in her hand, and flung it on the carpet at my

feet. For a moment I was too startled even to move. Her face was convulsed with rage; her face was terrible, more terrible than I have ever seen it. The scar seemed to whiten, the blood rushed to her other cheek and made her forehead purple; her eyes glowed. I stooped to pick up the letter, and began to smooth it out on my knee. I fixed my eyes on it, so as not to see her; and she knew why I did not look at her. She seemed to make a great effort to recover her self-control, and I saw her fingers clutch a fold of her skirt and clench tightly upon it. 'You want to see her?' she said, still in a low voice; and I said, what was quite the truth: 'No, I do not want to see her, I only want to help her, and I think it would be kinder, as well as more satisfactory, to go than to write.' 'I understand,' she said coldly; 'you want to see her again. I understand your feeling.' I was annoyed at her misinterpretation, and said nothing. 'You still care for her,' she said, 'I can see it, it is useless for you to deny it; you want to go back to her. Well, she is free now: go back to her.' I was going to protest, but she rose, and held up her hand to silence me. Tears were in her eyes, the anger was gone, she could hardly speak. 'Yes,' she said, 'go and see her; I will not keep you from her; if you still love her, there is nothing else to be done. I understand, I understand.' And she sank back in the chair again, with her hands over her face, weeping big tears.

When I saw her suffering, I was sorry, and I knelt down beside her and took away one of her hands from before her face, and kissed the hand still wet with tears. I assured her that Clare was nothing to me now, and I convinced her of my sincerity. She dried her eyes, smiled sadly, and said, 'Then you promise me you will not go and see her.' 'But no,' I said, 'I have told you that it is best to go and see her; but you know the whole reason why I mean to do so.' She turned rigid in an instant, and I should have had to go through the whole scene over again, if I had not had the cowardice to say, 'I promise that I will not see her.' She begged me to show her the letter that I wrote. Why should I refuse?

After to-day there can be no further disguise between us. On her side everything has been said, and on mine everything has been understood. By what I have done to-day I have put myself into her hands, I have given her the right to arrange my life as she pleases; I have shown her my weakness, I have let her see her own strength. Does it matter how one gives way, or how a woman overcomes? To-day I honestly wanted to do the right thing, to be kind to a woman I had once cared for, and I am powerless to do it. These agitations, these restrictions, this sentimental ceremony, are too much for me. How is it that I did not sooner realise the way things were tending, and set a barrier, not only against this passionate foe without, but against this weakness, this kindness, that turn traitors within, and run so readily to the closed gates to open them?

November 8.—The letter I wrote was cold; it was as if one were giving charity. Clare replies gratefully, as if to a benevolent stranger. I have spoilt the idea which she still had of me. I am sorry for it; the more so as I have no desire to see her; but I should like to have behaved at least instinctively. It is for another woman, always, that one is unjust to a woman. And why is it? Is it because I pity this woman so much, that I have been unjust to the other? I did not know till yesterday how much she cared for me. What is going to happen? I ask myself, not liking, or not daring, to wait for an answer. How one evades coming to a conclusion, precisely when too much depends on that conclusion! I have never understood myself, and just now the brain in me seems to sit aside and reserve judgment, while all manner of feelings, instincts, sensations, chatter among themselves. No, I will confess nothing to these pages, and chiefly because it would take a casuist to prepare my confession.

November 9.—She loves me cruelly, with a dull passion that does not come till after youth and the years one calls the years of love are long past. I have had a terrible scene with her; terrible because, for the first time, a woman's love seems to me a wholly serious thing, and one's own feeling to matter less. My own feeling: what is it here? Shall I understand one woman, at last, when the desire to do so is over? Passions, then, are real things in women, and, if no one is responsible, at least one cannot always hold aloof from them, or go by on the other side. She loves me, and she can conceal it no longer; and she is ashamed that I should see her as she is, and she exults in her shame, and is reckless and timorous, and is at my mercy, and does not know that it is just this that holds me, and that I cannot, if I would, turn away from one now helpless, and a beggar. Something in her helplessness takes hold of me like a great force, breaks down my indifference; because, I think, it convinces me, to the roots of my mind, as no woman ever before convinced me, that what one calls love may be life itself, carrying away all the props of the world in its overflow. I am afraid of this horrible reality; but I cannot escape it.

November 10.—I try to persuade myself that I have become her lover wholly out of pity; but the more intimate self which listens is not to be persuaded. Certainly I do not love her, but is it only because she loves me, and because she is the most unfortunate of women, that . . . No, there is something else, some animal attraction, which comes to me in spite of my repugnance; a gross, unmistakable desire, which I would not admit even to myself if the consciousness of it were not forced upon me. What I should not have believed in another, I experience, beyond denial, in myself.

Shall a man never know what it is in him that responds, without love, to a woman's gesture? Is it a kind of animal vanity? Is it that love creates, not love, but a flattered readiness to be loved? Did I not think how terrible it would be if she fell in love again, and did I not mean, for the main part, because she could expect no return? And I was wrong. Something has taken hold of me, an appeal, a partly honest and partly perverse attraction; and I say to myself that it is pity, but though pity is part of it, it is not all pity; and I find myself, as I have always found myself, doing the exact opposite of what seems most natural and desirable. Why?

November 20.—I have made a mistake, but it was inevitable. I have put back my shoulders under the yoke, and all the peace is over. I have had just time enough to rest, and to get ready for the old labour, and now I am troubled with all a woman's ingenuity of trouble: her nerves, her cares, her affections, her solicitudes, her whole minute and never-ceasing possession. How am I to explain myself? There was no choice; it is useless to regret what could but have been accepted. She has a calm will to love, she is like some force of nature against which it is useless to struggle.

November 22.—I do not know why it is, but all my old nervous uneasiness is coming back on me again, against all sense or reason. I have that curious feeling that something is going to happen; I find myself listening to noises, unable to sit quiet, watching my own brain. All the restlessness has come back, and some of the fear. I am afraid of this woman's love. I could not leave her, but I am afraid of what will happen to me.

December 3.—No, I shall never get accustomed to it; the same physical horror will always be there; it has been there when the attraction was strongest; it has never been out of my mind, or away from the eyes of my senses. She is aware of it, and suffers; and I am helpless before her suffering. And it is this, nothing but this, which turns my thoughts morbid, whenever I think over a situation which might otherwise have had nothing unusual in it. The husband studies me with a kind of curious and mocking interest, which he allows to remain on his face when he sees us together. Does he suspect, know, approve, or disapprove? Do I seem to him . . . But in any case all that is beside the question: I once thought that it would be a generous revenge to make him suffer; now I am conscious how idle the thought was. Is it not all idle, is not everything more or less beside the question?

I am tired of writing in my journal, always the same things. I will shut the book, and perhaps not open it again.

January 5.—I have not written anything in my journal for years (how many years is it?), and I do not know what impulse or what accident has led me to open it again, and to turn over some of the pages on which the dust has settled, and to begin to write there as I am doing, half mechanically. What is it that seems strange as I read what I have written here? I suppose that I should have considered, discussed, questioned the very things which are now as if they had always been. I do not dream of changing them, any more than I dream of changing the course of life itself, on its inevitable way. But a rage in me never quite dies out: against this woman who has taken me from myself, and against life that is wasting me daily. I have no happiness if I look either forward or backward. I have always succumbed to what I have most dreaded, and every reluctance has turned in me to an irresistible force of attraction. And now I am softly, stealthily entangled, held by loving hands, imprisoned in comfort; I do some good at last, for certainly I help to make a wronged and pitiable woman happy; I have no will to break any bond, and yet I am more desolately alone than I have ever been, more fretted by the old self, by apprehensions and memories, by the passing of time and the lack of hope or desire. I would welcome any change, though it brought worse things, if I could but end this monotony in which there is no rest; end it somehow, and rest a little, and be alone.

October 12.—I have been ill, I am better, I am in Venice. Surely one gets well of every trouble in Venice, where, if anywhere in the world, there should be peace, the oblivion of water, of silence, the unreal life of sails? I have come to an old house on the Giudecca, where one is islanded even from the island life of Venice: I look across and see land, the square white Dogana, the Salute, like a mosque, the whole Riva, with the Doges' Palace. There lies all that is most beautiful in the world, and I have only to look out of my windows to see it. Palladio built the house, and the rooms are vast; the beams overhead are so high that I feel shrunk as I look at them, as if lost in all this space; which, however, delights my humour.

October 14.—The art in life is to sit still, and to let things come towards you, not to go after them, or even to think that they are in flight. How often I have chased some divine shadow, through a whole day till evening, when, going home tired, I have found the visitor just turning away from my closed door.

To sit still, in Venice, is to be at home to every delight. I love St. Mark's, the Piazza, the marble benches under the colonnade of the Doges' Palace, the end of land beyond the Dogana, the steps of the Redentore; above all, my own windows. Sitting at any one of these stations one gathers as many floating strays of life as a post in the sea gathers weeds. And it is all a sort of immense rest, literally a dream, for there is sleep all over Venice. I have been sitting for a long time in St. Mark's, thinking of nothing. The voices of the priests chanting hummed and buzzed like echoes in an iron bell. They troubled me a little, but without breaking the enchantment, as importunate insects trouble a summer afternoon. Very old men in purple sat sunk into the stalls of the choir, loth to move, almost overcome with sleep; waiting, with an accustomed patience, till the task was over.

Here (infinite relief!) I can think of nothing. She writes to me, and I put aside the letters, and I forget quite easily that some day she will come for me, and the old life must begin over again. I do not dread it, because I do not remember it. I am still weak, and I must not excite myself; I must sink into this delicious Venice, where forgetfulness is easier than anywhere in the world. The autumn is like a gentler summer; no such autumn has been known, even in Venice, for many years; and I am to be happy here, I think.

October 25.—I have been roaming about the strange house, upstairs, in these vast garrets paved with stone, with old carved chimneys, into which they have put modern stoves, and beams, the actual roof-trees overhead; nearly all unoccupied space, out of which a room is walled up or boarded off here and there. Some of the windows look right over the court, the two stone angels on the gateway, and the broad green and brown orto, the fruit garden which stretches to the lagoon, its vine trellises invisible among the close leaves of the trees. Beyond the brown and green, there is a little strip of pale water, and then mud flats, where the tide has ebbed, the palest brown, and then more pale water, and the walls and windows of the madhouse, San Servolo, coming up squarely out of the lagoon.

October 26.—Does the too exciting exquisiteness of Venice drive people mad?

Two madhouses in the water! It is like a menace.

I went out in the gondola yesterday on the lagoon on the other side of the island. It was an afternoon of faint, exquisite sunshine, and the water lay like a mirror, bright and motionless, reflecting nothing but a small stake, or the hull, hoisted nets, and stooping back of a fisher and his boat. I looked along the level, polished surface to where sails rose up against the sky, between the black, compact bulk of the forts. The water lapped around the oar as it dipped and lifted, and trickled with a purring sound from the prow. I lay and felt perfectly happy, not thinking of anything, hardly conscious of myself. I had closed my eyes, and when I opened them again we were drifting close to a small island, on which there was a many-windowed building, most of the windows grated over, and a church with closed doors; the building almost filled the island; it had a walled garden with trees. A kind of moaning sound came from inside the walls, rising and falling, confused and broken. 'It is San Clemente,' said the gondolier over my shoulder; 'they keep mad people there, mad women.'

November 1.—She writes affectionate letters to me, without a respite; she will not let me alone to get well. For I am sure I could get well here if I were quite left to myself. And now even Venice is turning evil. Is it in the place, in myself, is it my disease returning to take hold of me? Is it the power of the woman coming back across land and water to take hold of me? I am getting afraid to go about this strange house at night; the wind comes in from the sea, and tears at the old walls and the roof; I scarcely know if it is the wind I hear when I wake up in the night.

November 3.—There is something unnatural in standing between water and water and hearing the shriek of a steam-engine. I am hardly too far, I suppose, from the railway-station, to have actually heard it. But the idea seems a foolish joke, unworthy of the place.

November 6.—Every day I find myself growing more uneasy. If I look out of the windows at dawn, when land and water seem to awaken like a flower, some poison comes to me out of this perhaps too perfect beauty. I dread the day, which seems to follow me and drag me back, after I have escaped another night; I never felt anything like this insidious coiling of water about one.

I came to Venice for peace, and I find a subtle terror growing up out of its waters, with a more ghostly insistence than anything solid on the earth has ever given me. Daylight seems to mask some gulf, which, with the early dark and the first lamps, begins to grow visible. As I look across at Venice from this island, I see darkness, and lights growing like trees and flowers out of the creeping water, and, white and immense, with its black windows and one lighted lamp, the Doges' Palace. Nothing else is real, and the beauty of this one white thing, the one thing whose form the eye can fasten upon, is the beauty of witchcraft. I expect to see it gone in the morning.

And the noises here are mysterious. I hear a creak outside my window, and it comes nearer, and a great orange sail passes across the window like a curtain drawn over it. Bells break out, and ring wildly, as if out of the water. Steamers hoot, with that unearthly sound to which one can never get accustomed. The barking of a dog comes from somewhere across the water, a voice cries out suddenly, and then the shriek of steam from a vessel, and again, from some new quarter, a volley of bells.

November 9.—The wind woke me from sleep, rattling the wooden shutter against the panes of the windows, and I could hear it lifting the water up the steps of the landing-place, where there is always a chafing and gurgling whenever the wind is not quite still. I looked out, and, pressing my face close against the glass, I could just distinguish the black bundle of stakes in the dim water, which I could see throbbing under a very faint light, where the gas-lamp, hung from the next house, shone upon it. Beyond, there was nothing but darkness, and the level row of lights on the Riva, and the white walls, cut into stone lacework, of the Doges' Palace. The wind seemed to pass down the canal, as if on its way from the sea to the sea. I felt it go by, like a living thing, not turning to threaten me.

November 13.—I am beginning almost to wish that she were here. She writes that she is coming, and I scarcely know whether to be glad or sorry. I fear her more than anything in the world, but there is something here which is hardly of the world, a vague, persistent image of death, impalpable, unintelligible, not to be shaken off; and I know not what I am dreading, not the mere fear of water, though I have always had that, but some terrible expectancy, which keeps me now from getting any rest by day or by night.

November 22.—At last something has happened, nothing indeed to my hurt, but it has broken the strain a little. The last days have been windless, warm, and, till yesterday afternoon, cloudless. Suddenly, as I sat in the Piazza, the daylight seemed to be put out by a great blackness which came up rapidly out of the north, and hung over half the sky. A wind swept suddenly in from the lagoon, and blew sharply across the open space and along the arcades. In hardly more than a moment the Piazza was empty. I went down to the Riva, and called to my gondolier, who swung to and fro in his moored boat. The water was blackening, and had begun to race past. He called to me that we must wait, and I saw one or two gondolas hurrying up the Grand Canal, carried along by the tide, the men rowing hard. As the rain began I went into the Grand Hotel, and sat looking out on the water, which blackened and whitened and flung itself forward in actual waves, and splashed right up the steps and over the balcony. The rain came down steadily, and the lightning flickered across the sky behind the Salute, and lit up the domes, the windows, the steps, and a few people huddled there. Every now and then the water turned white; I saw every outline as it shouldered forward like a sea and broke on the marble steps; and the water was empty, not a gondola, not even a steamer;

and then a steamer which had turned home drifted past without a passenger. I went out, and felt the rain on my face, and the water splashing on the steps; not far off I could see the gondolas tossing on their moorings. I seemed to be on the shore of some horrible island, and I had to cross the sea, which there was no crossing. I was afraid the gondola would come for me; but nothing, I thought, should tempt me upon that tossing water: I saw the black hull whirled sideways, and the man reeling over on his oar. No gondola came, and I slept that night in the Grand Hotel, which seemed to me, as I heard the water splashing under my windows, impregnably safe.

November 27.—She is here, she has become kind to me now, only kind and gentle; I am no longer afraid of her love. I have been ill again, and she has taken care of me, she has taken me away from this horrible Giudecca. I look out on a great garden, in which I can forget there is any water in Venice; I am near the land and I see nothing but trees. The house is full of pictures, beautiful old Venetian things; it is like living in another century, yet in the midst of a comfort which rests me. I am no longer afraid of her love; I seem to have become a child, and her love is maternal. When I look at her I can see her face as it was, as it is, without a scar; I see that she is beautiful. If I get well again I will never leave her.

December 12.—There is a phrase of Balzac which turns over and over in my head. It is in the story called 'Sur Catherine de Médicis,' and he is speaking of the Calvinist martyr, who is recovering after being tortured. 'On ne saurait croire' says Balzac, 'à quel point un homme, seul dans son lit et malade, devient personnel.' Since I have been lying in bed, in this queer fever which keeps me shaking and hot (some Venetian chill which has got into my very bones), I have had so singularly little feeling of personality, I seem to have become so suddenly impersonal, that I wonder if Balzac was right. The world, ideas, sensations, all are fluid, and I flow through them, like a gondola carried along by the current; no, like a weed adrift on it.

The journal ends there, and the writing of the last page is faint and unsteady.

Here I might leave the matter, but I am impelled to mention a circumstance which I always associate in my mind with the tragical situation revealed in poor Luxulyan's journal. A year after it had come into my hands, and while I was still hesitating whether or not to have it printed, I happened to be passing through Rome, where the Eckensteins had gone to live; and a sort of curiosity, I suppose, more than any friendly feeling I had for them, suggested to me that I should call upon them in the palace which they had taken in the Via Giulia. The concierge was not in his loge, and I went up the first flight of broad low marble stairs and rang at the door. It was opened by a servant in livery. 'Is the Baroness von Eckenstein at home?' I asked; and as the man remained silent, I added, 'Will you send in my card?' He still stared at me without replying, and I repeated my question. At last he said: 'Madame la Baronne died the day before yesterday. She was buried this morning.'

I can hardly say that I was profoundly grieved, but the suddenness of the announcement struck me with a kind of astonishment. I inquired for the Baron; he was in, and I was taken through one after another of the vast marble rooms which, in Roman palaces, lead to the reception-room. Every room was crowded with pictures, statues, rare Eastern vases, tables and cases of bibelots, exotic plants, a profusion of showy things brought together from the ends of the world. The Baron received me with almost more than his usual ceremony. His face wore an expression of correct melancholy, he spoke in a subdued and slightly mournful voice. He told me that his beloved wife had succumbed to a protracted illness, that she had suffered greatly, but, at the end, through the skilful aid of the best surgeons in Europe, she had passed into a state of somnolency, so that her death had been almost unconscious. He raised his eyes with an air of pious resignation, and said that he thanked God for having taken to himself so admirable, so perfect a being, whose loss, indeed, must leave him inconsolable for the rest of his life on earth. He spoke in measured syllables, and always in the same precise and mournful tone. I found myself unconsciously echoing his voice and reflecting his manner, and it seemed to me as if we were both playing in a comedy, and repeating words which we had learnt by heart. I went through my part mechanically, and left him. When I found myself in the street I dismissed the cab which was waiting to take me to the Vatican. I wanted to walk. I do not know why I felt a cold shiver run through me, for the sky was cloudless, and it was the month of June.

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